

**THE SABBATH AS A DAY OF WORSHIP:
THE EVIDENCE PRIOR TO 200 CE**

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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PREFACE

My interest in this topic arose out of the title of a prize essay: 'Prophecy and the Sabbath!', and researching for that essay led me to see how slight is the actual information available about the sabbath praxis of Jews in ancient Israel, and also how varied are the constructions built on that evidence.

I have received great encouragement from friends in The Society for Old Testament Study and in the Society for Biblical Literature, since I began this project in 1987, and wish to express my thanks to them for all their stimulation of my research by their varied questions and by their attitudes ranging from intrigued curiosity to outright disbelief.

In particular I would like to thank Robert P. Carroll, for his powerful yet restrained supervision of my work, and David J.A. Clines, Loveday A.C. Alexander and A. Graeme Auld for the undoubted benefit of in-depth discussion on the possibilities and pitfalls of working within such a wide-ranging subject area. Without their encouragement and genuine interest, my interest would not have maintained its steady level throughout.

Members of my family have provided a more uncritical support, but that has nonetheless been of inestimable value to me, and I would like to state my gratitude to them also.

THE SABBATH AS A DAY OF WORSHIP: THE EVIDENCE PRIOR TO 200 CE

SUMMARY

This thesis reports what may be known about the sabbath activities of Jews prior to 200 CE, using as sources the Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal and Deutero-canonical works, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the works of Philo and Josephus, the New Testament, the Mishnah and also Graeco-Roman texts from both secular and Christian backgrounds. Evidence from archaeological data, inscriptions and papyri is also presented.

A crucial point made is that sabbath observance and sabbath worship are not synonymous, one denoting sabbath rest and inaction, and the other indicating a purposive, communal activity in which Jewish people address God, and do so particularly because it is the sabbath.

The Hebrew Bible supplies no evidence of sabbath worship for ordinary worshippers, insisting only on sabbath rest. The texts do, however, indicate priestly activities in the Temple on the sabbath.

Among the Apocryphal and Deutero-canonical works from the last two centuries BCE, Judith, Maccabees and Jubilees display more interest in the holiness of the sabbath, the writers viewing the sabbath as a holy entity that conditioned the behaviour of Jews. But they give no details of religious events on the sabbath, and other works from the same period, namely Tobit and Ben Sira, do not mention the sabbath at all.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, from a similar date, come from a community that concentrated its life on the religious sphere and therefore contain more rigorous prescriptions for conduct on the sabbath. That community kept a religious year of numbered sabbaths on which particular songs were sung.

The works of Philo and Josephus yield a picture of Jewish activities on sabbath and of Jewish worship assemblies on other days. The mood of the sabbath gatherings has less religious fervour than that revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Instead, civil unrest and in-group disputations characterise the sabbath activities of the Jews in their prayer-houses (προσευχαί). Study of the Law, political and philosophical discussions took place there on the sabbath, and the prayer-houses were also the locus for religious veneration of the Roman imperial house. As far as worship is concerned, Philo and Josephus refer to prayers on weekdays, but they describe neither sabbath worship services nor prayers on the sabbath. The only Jews described by Philo who did carry out communal worship activities were the Therapeutae (daily) and the Essenes (on sabbaths), particularly religious-minded groups of Jews in Alexandria. Josephus refers to sabbath worship only by reference to pre-70 CE sacrifice in the Temple. He refers to no current sabbath worship.

Of crucial importance is the fact that the word *synagogue* has two meanings, the group of Jews who met together and organised the religious life of the community, and the building in which these groups met. Philo uses the term *synagogue* only once, when he refers to the Essenes' name for their sacred place. Josephus uses the word

synagogue in similar contexts to prayer-house (προσευχή), but never uses both words of any one particular building.

In the New Testament, synagogues are described as administering community justice, as well as initiating teaching, and on the sabbath providing the locus for the reading and expounding of the Law and, in the case of Luke's Jesus, also the prophet Isaiah. But no worship services are described.

Jesus and Paul are likely to have attended sabbath gatherings, like those Philo and Josephus describe. But since gatherings that were liable to beat and expel Christians, such as are described or threatened in the gospels, cannot have happened in the lifetime of Jesus, awareness of the time gap between events and records and the resulting alteration of perspective, leads to a tempered interpretation of the New Testament data. The synagogues, whether groups or buildings, described in the Gospels and Acts are later than Philo, Jesus and Paul.

The writings of Latin and Greek authors prior to 200 CE provide a useful background against which to read the religious texts. They know of sabbath as a day that is celebrated in the Jewish home, beginning with the Friday lamp-lighting and evening meal and they describe Jewish prayer-houses in Rome as buildings with courtyards, from the beginning of the second century CE. A comparison of that with Philo's description of many prayer-houses in Rome suggests a development in the number and size of the prayer-houses between about 40 CE and 130 CE. This gives an indication of change in the visibility of Jewish prayer-houses during the time range of the New Testament writings.

A further comparison is provided by the writings of the Christian apologists. The points they argue with Jews about are keeping the Law, circumcision and keeping the sabbath. There is no reference as to any disagreement over the mode and timing of the worship of God. Justin does speak out against the Jews' cursing of Christians in the synagogues, but there is no association of that with sabbath gatherings. Sabbath worship is not mentioned at all.

The Mishnah gives a great many restrictions on sabbath behaviour, but has little to say about sabbath assemblies. The details given about prayers and scripture reading apply to Mondays and Thursdays as well as Saturday, and the sabbath is distinct only in having more readers, not more worship practices.

The archaeological data on the earliest Jewish meeting houses show that prayer-houses were common in the Diaspora, but synagogues, as buildings, have left no certain first-century CE remains in Palestine. Many inscriptions from all over the eastern Mediterranean area show that synagogues were groups of Jewish men with civic power and influence active in their communities.

In conclusion, the Jewish sabbath was in transition from being originally a day of rest, to being a day of study and discussion during the period covered by this study. But there is no evidence that it had become a day of worship by the time of writing of the literature surveyed here. Only the Essenes, as described by Philo, and the Jews of the Dead Sea community congregated for worship on the sabbath.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BK	Biblischer Kommentar
CBC	The Cambridge Bible Commentary
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	Septuagint
NRSV	The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OUP	Oxford University Press
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to discover what may be known about the sabbath activities of Jews in the cities and towns of the central and eastern Mediterranean, through the period prior to 200 CE.

That priests carried out acts of worship in the Temple is made clear in the texts of the Hebrew Bible. But that practice ceased after 70 CE.

The possibilities for non-priestly Jews are that: they carried out particular acts of worship on sabbath in communal buildings; they met together on sabbath for activities that included worship; they met together for purposes other than worship on sabbath; they had no sabbath worship activities, as such, reserving sabbath as a day of rest and inactivity, and worshipped on weekdays or festal days. I will re-examine the evidence which could show whether sabbath was a day with worship practices for non-priestly Jews, and discover, if possible, what Jews actually did on sabbath, and decide if these actions may be evaluated as worship or not.

As it is frequently assumed that the Jewish attitude to the sabbath and the behaviour of Jews on the sabbath were completely stable and unchanging over hundreds of years, evidence will be presented which shows the changes in the importance of the sabbath in the different Jewish communities whose views have been preserved in texts.

The sources used are, in the main, literary works: the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal and Deutero-canonical works, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the works of Philo and Josephus, the New Testament, the Mishnah and also Graeco-Roman sources from both secular and

Christian backgrounds. The texts have been studied in English translations and in the original, or extant, languages. Secondary literature relating to the same materials has also been studied and the arguments and opinions published there have been analysed and integrated into the study.

A fundamental distinction made in this work is that sabbath observance and sabbath worship are not synonymous, the former denoting mainly inactivity on the sabbath, the sabbath rest and cessation of work and trading that are plainly and frequently enjoined throughout the biblical and associated literature; and the latter indicating a purposive, communal activity which is offered to a specific deity from the standpoint of worship. Many writers on the topic of sabbath, or on the development of Sunday as the Christian day of worship, make no distinction between sabbath observance and sabbath worship. But for this study, progress can only be made, and my arguments followed, if the distinction is kept in mind at all times.

Worship has been defined as 'Religious acts ... directed to a deity who is recognised to be infinitely higher than man, to be righteous and faithful, and to be compassionate towards men' and as including recitation of the mighty works of God, sacrifice and offering, offering of praise, and attendance at feasts as renewed dedication of the people of God.¹ Another definition is 'the attitude and acts of reverence to a deity'.²

I define worship as rites and rituals which pay homage, with adoration and awe, to a particular, named god. Worship can include sacrificing plants and animals, dancing, playing music, singing

¹ *Concise Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 331-32.

² Rattray, 'Worship'.

hymns or psalms, reading or reciting sacred texts, prayers and blessings. Instructions for, or descriptions of, these types of activity in the texts are regarded as evidences of worship either expected of, or carried out by, any religious community. So I will look for evidence of these types of activity initiated and performed by Jews for the attention of their god. Other types of communal activity, political, educational or social, will not be regarded as worship.

The methods adopted in this study involve strict delimitation of source materials and intensive study of each source as an isolated, individual datum, independent of the other sources. Once this process is complete the discussion will be augmented and enhanced by including the insights and arguments of other scholars. Thereafter, comparisons will be made of findings from the different sources and then conflation and assimilation of the findings into a composite picture may be carried out, but only if such conflation and/or assimilation is justified.

I have several times found that scholars have taken up and used as data what turn out to be no more than the hypotheses of another writer, and have also found erroneous material from one source being quoted and referred to in several other books on the same topic. To avoid this difficulty, every reference quoted has been checked in the original source and attention has been drawn to the cases where it has not been possible to trace the source quotation.

The scientific concept of 'controls' has been found useful while working with the various texts. That means that wherever possible the same investigations have been carried out on two or more similar institutions or sources. The results allow comparison of the ways key

issues are perceived and expressed from the different perspectives of the parallel sources. This enables the reader to make allowance for the bias of the different sources, thus making possible a more objective appreciation of the data collected.

Thus when trying to assess whether sabbath is presented as a day of worship in the Hebrew Bible, I carry out a parallel investigation on new moon, the most similar holy day in the Hebrew Bible, and one that is fourteen times coupled with sabbath in the texts. And when trying to discover the origins and locations of meeting-houses for Jews, and when trying to find out what happened in them on sabbath, I will regard different groups of authors as providing different estimates of the same institutions.

Thus, because Jewish authors, gospel writers, Roman literary figures and later Christian authors, representing benevolent, argumentative, satirical and hostile perspectives respectively, give four different descriptions and evaluations of the same institutions, the comments of each group can be used to modulate the views of the others and facilitate an appreciation of the effect their respective biases has had on their accounts. If the pictures from all four perspectives are essentially the same, though coloured by their author's viewpoints, then I will have more confidence that the picture/s thus obtained of prayer-houses, of synagogues—whether groups or buildings—and of the meetings that took place, have a good basis in historical reality.

In Chapter 2, I will assess whether the Hebrew Bible presents the sabbath as a day on which private or communal worship activities were compulsory, appropriate, or even permitted or possible, by

making a detailed study of, followed by comparison of, the texts which mention, explain or discuss sabbath and new moon. Both these are regularly recurring days with religious connotations, and by comparing what happens on them, and how they are spoken of in the texts, the main issues determinative in regarding a day as a day of worship come to light.

Groupings of festivals, such as linkings of names of festivals in word pairs, or lists of three or four, will also be studied from different parts of the Hebrew Bible to find out whether they give a consistent indication of how the sabbath was perceived by the community. And the cultic calendars which list the sacrifices specified for the several sorts of holy day will be compared, again to see if there is a unified portrayal of the place of the sabbath in religious behaviour, as it is pictured in the texts. References to prayer by biblical characters will also be evaluated.

In Chapter 3, inter-testamental works will be studied. By comparing the views held, or details given, about sabbath in the apocryphal and deuterocanonical texts we can assess whether the sabbath had a changing role and status or a stable importance as time passed on to the turn of the era. Comparisons of the amount of concern each text reveals about the sabbath, and of how each text regards sabbath compared with other holy days reveal differences in the importance of the various days, and allow exploration of the change in these status gradations with the passage of time.

Because the Dead Sea Scrolls have a similar date to the apocryphal and deuterocanonical works, but come from a community that concentrated its life on the religious sphere, they are a good place

to look for an expansion of interest in all holy days, and in particular, sabbath. The ramification of rules for observing the sabbath there will be studied, and a comparison of how that interest compares with interest in other holy days will be made.³ These inter-testamental texts will also be surveyed to reveal the attitude of their writers to new moon and to prayer on the sabbath.

Chapter 4 draws information from the works of Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus who, living in the secular world of the eastern Mediterranean, spanned in their writing lives most of the first century CE, with Philo earlier than Josephus. These two authors give descriptions of Judaism at the time of Jesus, Paul, and the early church. Because both were prolific writers, much helpful material about the meetings of the Jews can be gleaned from the writings of Philo and Josephus. What they disclose increases our knowledge of sabbath activities of Jews, for they describe a variety of types of meetings of Jews on the sabbath.

And because the developed form of Jewish sabbath worship that has continued until today takes place in buildings called synagogues, and because Philo and Josephus paint the fullest and most direct pictures that we have of the meeting-houses of the Jews, the details they give about the earliest *προσευχαί* or synagogues, including such information as their structures and contents, will also be dealt with in Chapter 4.

However, a difficulty that has to be borne in mind when dealing with material on synagogues is the problem caused by the ambiguity of the term 'synagogue'. The same word can mean the group of Jewish

³ I realise that this section of the thesis may well be proved incomplete when more Qumrân material is published.

people in a particular community who regularly gathered together, or it can mean the building in which they met. Or it can mean the people as they met together in the building. Close attention, therefore, is paid to the texts about synagogues to clarify, where possible, which meaning the word 'synagogue' has on each occasion it is used, but often the ambiguity cannot be resolved.

Chapter 4, then, provides a picture of the Jewish religious scene contemporary to the narrative time of the New Testament texts studied in Chapter 6. This is valuable, because the latter are rarely able to be dated accurately, either for the time of composition, ^{for the time of final editing or} or for any of the hypothetical stages in between. So the pictures of Jewish religious life supplied by Philo and Josephus, both Jewish men of letters, involved in public life and living in a similar cultural ambience, but at slightly different dates in the first century, form a more secure basis of our knowledge of what was common and familiar in the Jewish communities of the central and eastern Mediterranean.

Secular source material from the Graeco-Roman world, with dates which can also be more closely determined than the biblical material, provides an alternate picture of the religious world of the Jews. So, in Chapter 5, I have surveyed the writings of Seneca, Persius, Juvenal and others, with well-attested dates across the first century CE and into the second. Their writings provide a useful range of control materials against which to read the religious texts, because both the perspective of those authors on the Jews, and their reasons for writing, are quite different from those of the writers of the New Testament texts.

These secular writers did not have a confessional stance; they wrote to provoke interest in, amusement at, and sale of, their work. Any descriptions or comments they have in common with the religious sources are of the highest importance, especially if the same hard facts are expressed in language that is coloured by their different agenda. Also these works were written, usually, within a short time span, for a certain purpose or occasion and they reflect the mind of the author at that particular time. This allows the texts to record what each author observed from one single perspective. This too contrasts with the frequently edited and re-written texts of the New Testament, for which the idea of one unedited author is rare, if not non-applicable. Therefore, first- and second-century Latin and Greek texts will be searched for information on the Jewish sabbath, and about the meeting-houses of Jews, as they were perceived in the minds of the Graeco-Roman *literati*.

Because Jesus and Paul were Jews and are portrayed in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles as attending synagogues, Chapter 6 contains the evidence the New Testament can provide. Appreciating the complexity of the material recorded in these texts involves having an awareness of the two time zones discernible in New Testament writings: the time avowedly being described, the time of Jesus or Paul; and the time of the writers, which time and cultural environment have informed all their thinking and forms of expression. The differences between the four Gospel accounts of Jesus' relations with the synagogue, and the difference between the lack of any references to synagogues in Paul's letters and Luke's Paul working frequently in synagogues, will be noted and the conclusions drawn about

'synagogues' in the first century and the activities that took place in them will take account of these differences.

The concentration of attention on activities prohibited on the sabbath in the gospel texts will also be surveyed, and compared with the writers' lack of interest in other holy days. This New Testament interest in sabbath as a day with many prohibitions is comparable with the strict view of sabbath revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jubilees.

Chapter 7 will discuss the further useful control material provided by the writings of some early Christian authors: Ignatius, Barnabas, Justin, Hippolytus and Tertullian. Here, again, the datings within the second century CE are relatively reliable and, here, as with the secular writers of the same time, the works were composed without the many layers of editing familiar to readers of biblical texts.

Many of the Christian works of that time have what is often termed an anti-Jewish flavour and frequently present the Jews and Christians as a matched pair of opposites who originally sprang from the same stock. Views on regular worship and on the observance of one day in seven will be noted and compared for the two communities to discover which aspects are given priority in each community.

Chapter 8 deals with the evidence for sabbath practice and worship in the Mishnah, great care being taken to separate what is relevant to the sabbath from material about daily or festal worship. Sections referring to prayer and the reading of scriptures show how the sabbath is regarded in relation to other days of the week.

In Chapter 9, archaeological and epigraphic material will be presented to complement the information obtained from literary

works. It is important to ascertain that both types of evidence present essentially the same picture of Jewish religious life. The relevant inscriptions and papyri will be scrutinised in the original languages, and from photographs or drawings which show the layout and relative importance of the different sections of the inscription. The work of several scholars will be consulted in order to be sure that this evidence is fairly represented and laid out beside the literary evidence in a sensible and helpful way. Under these conditions, the epigraphic material supplies another control on the evidence gained from the textual material.

On a more general note, the need for undertaking this study can be seen by consulting either articles in Bible dictionaries on the sabbath, or on synagogues or on worship, or the parallel chapters in introductions to the Bible and related topics. The confusion of many of the points that this study has determined to distinguish can quickly be seen, and also the assumption of an unchanging and uniform pattern of sabbath behaviour and worship over many centuries.

The resultant misconstruing of all types of evidence creates an overall picture that begins to be quite false. Each error or looseness of argument or description, not crucial on its own, combines into an imprecise, and on some occasions, inaccurate picture of the religious life of the Jews in the eastern Mediterranean area during the time of this study. Such a picture could only be acceptable when painting in broad brushstrokes for beginners in the field. But for more serious scholars the inaccuracies introduced are unacceptable.

Therefore, I have felt it necessary to gather what actual evidence may be found quite separately from the conclusions and

interpretations based on the evidence. Since many others have looked at the evidence before me, but have construed it differently, I have taken care to deal with each piece of evidence, as far as possible, on its own and to add insights from explanations and interpretations afterwards to illumine the sparse picture the evidence affords. But I have also been concerned to make clear what can be known with clarity and certainty, before I have collated what may be known as probabilities or possibilities.

It is relevant to state at this point that some of the ideas and explanations which have been fully worked through in this thesis have been published by me in shorter form in articles in collections of essays. These are:

‘New Moon or Sabbath?’, in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. T.C. Eskenazi, D.J. Harrington and W.H. Shea; New York: Crossroad, 1991), pp. 13-27.

‘From Evidence to Edifice: Four Fallacies about the Sabbath’ in *Text as Pretext: Essays in Honour of Robert Davidson* (ed. R.P. Carroll; JSOT Supplement Series, 138; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 179-99.

1. METHODS AND CRITERIA

BACKGROUND SOURCE MATERIALS

Much of the background history and geography for this study has been obtained from the series of Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World.

A well-organised introduction to the background of the period, with useful maps and Appendices, has been provided by Leaney in volume 7,¹ and other valuable maps and a chronological chart of rulers of the various kingdoms and empires from 400 BCE to 245 CE have been collated by Whittaker in volume 6.² The map provided by Haenchen supplied any further information required.³

Similarly comprehensive and informative writings have been made use of from the series of Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, in particular the volume by Smallwood.

Concise information on the roles and characters of notable persons mentioned in the texts can be found in Grant's wide-ranging survey of the interactions of Jews with the Roman world.⁴ Also helpful is Bell's detailed account of the Roman perception of Jews in Alexandria, either in the original,⁵ or as explained by Collins.⁶

¹ Leaney, *Jewish and Christian World*.

² Whittaker, *Views*.

³ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*.

⁴ Grant, *The Jews*.

⁵ Bell, *Egypt*, pp. 10-29.

⁶ Collins, 'Insiders and Outsiders'.

GENERAL APPROACH TO TEXTS

The texts have been read in the original or extant languages, and use has generally been made of more than one English translation. These have been compared with each other and with my own translations of key passages, wherever extra concentration on meaning was necessary. Several dictionaries have been consulted to form a deeper understanding of all the words which have several meanings or which have a wider range of meaning than the closest English equivalents.

Dictionaries have also been used to point to authors or works where the key words of this study occur, and indices to the writings of each author have also been consulted, in English and in the original, or extant, language, wherever possible.

Close readings of all the texts, biblical and non-biblical, have been undertaken, taking advantage of the insights supplied by the methods of form criticism and rhetorical criticism. With all texts, large sections have been surveyed and read in order to comprehend the aim of the discourse and to follow the flow of ideas or rhetoric in the passage in question. The use of short quoted sections of texts has been avoided, except as a means of locating relevant passages in the first place.

DATA FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND EPIGRAPHIC MATERIALS

Archaeological data have been considered primarily from the minimalist stance apparent in the writings of some scholars and then their conclusions have been compared with those of writers with a more optimistic view of what may be gleaned from the structural

remains and artefacts extant. It is hoped that, out of this dialectic, a more measured appreciation of the value of archaeological material as a source of data can come. Then the closely evaluated data can be used to give an extra perspective on the literary material.

An introduction to Greek epigraphy is supplied by Woodhead, who outlines the different types of inscriptions, the methods of dating and their limits, and also the different types of public and private information that may be derived from inscriptions.⁷

Texts of inscriptions and papyri have been studied from photographs, where available, and from transcripts. Notice has been taken of the proportion of reconstructed material in each piece, and of whether that affects the value of the material for this study. The structure of the writing as a literary text has also been appreciated and the subject matter of the various sections of the writing has been commented on where valuable. On occasions the modern language into which the original inscription has been translated has also coloured the meaning, so where necessary translations into more than one language have been compared.

The different collections of inscriptions and related material used give different types of information about the provenance and condition of the inscription, and in different languages. This has added to the complexity of preparing a clear analysis of the information relevant inscriptions can supply. But I have given enough information to allow sensible use of the data available.

For material from Europe I have used the *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*, I, of Frey, supplementing it for Rome with the work of

⁷ Woodhead, *Greek Inscriptions*.

Leon.⁸ Frey's collection covers Roman Europe, Greece and the Balkans, describes the condition of the inscriptions, includes many photographs, gives sketches of the inscriptions in upper-case Greek, transcriptions in lower-case Greek and translations in French. There are indices of important Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin terms. Lifshitz's *Prolegomenon* includes valuable additions and corrections, but, as may be noted from his discussions there and in his book,⁹ he does not distinguish between the buildings called synagogues and προσευχαί, so his comments and translations are at times out of harmony with Frey's.

Leon provides an update on the work of Frey for the epitaphs found in the catacombs in Rome. He includes photographs of some of the inscriptions in upper-case Greek, with sketches of the layout of text and iconography of all the inscriptions, giving a full transcription in lower-case Greek, and translation in English. Unfortunately, however, the logic of his ordering of the inscriptions is not immediately apparent, and involves the reader in constant cross-referencing with other collections.

The sources for Asia Minor and Africa are Frey's *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*, II, Lifshitz's *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives*; with Le Bas and Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines* and Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, dealing solely with Asia Minor; and Breccia, *Inscriptiones graecae Aegypti*, including only those inscriptions held in the museum in

⁸ Leon, *Ancient Rome*.

⁹ Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*.

Alexandria. Also of value for the regions bordering the north of the Black Sea are the collections of Latyshev.¹⁰

Frey's collection is prepared on the same model as volume 1, with the index of place names usually giving the name in the local language, often the Arabic name.

Lifshitz's collection includes only Greek inscriptions, all presented in lower-case Greek. He gives translations and comment in French. There are no photographs, and the inscriptions are ordered according to geographical location. There are enough errors in the Greek and in the translations to require the use of a parallel source for detailed work.

The collection of Le Bas and Waddington gives, in volume 1, transcripts of the inscriptions in upper-case Greek, showing the layout of the writing, and in volume 2 transcriptions into lower-case Greek and comments. The materials are ordered according to geographical location, the towns being grouped by Roman province. This collection is very useful because the listings given in both the Contents and the Index of Inscriptions allow a clear recognition of the exact site of each inscription, and eliminate the confusion due to possible duplication of place names.¹¹

The collection of texts in *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum* gathers in its three volumes the papyri and ostraka from Egypt which are

¹⁰ Latyshev, *Inscriptiones* I and II.

¹¹ A typical example of the confusion caused by the different modes of ordering and indexing inscriptions is provided by the dedication slab of a προσευχή from Schédia. Frey describes the place as 'Chedia (Kafr ed Daouar) au sud-est d'Alexandrie en Basse-Egypte'; Lifshitz as 'Chédia au sud-est d'Alexandrie en Egypte'; and Griffiths as 'Schedia, near the modern Kôm el-Gize, in the Fayûm, some twenty miles from Alexandria'. The reader needs all the indices and good maps to identify the site.

relevant to the study of Jews and Judaism.¹² The volumes cover three different historical periods, 323–30 BCE, 30 BCE–117 CE and 117 CE–641 CE. In addition, volume 3 also contains a collection of those inscriptions not included in volume 2 of *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*.¹³ A difficulty encountered in using this volume is that the inscriptions are transcribed in several styles.

For both archaeological and epigraphic material the secondary literature in the field has been subjected to the same rigour of scrutiny, attention being paid to the mode of discourse employed and to both overt and covert agendas of the writing, where these may be determined or surmised.¹⁴ Where quotations from the secondary literature are not in English, I have provided translations either in the text or in the footnotes.

APPROACH TO BIBLICAL AND RELATED TEXTS

All texts which refer to the sabbath have been surveyed and from them texts which describe sabbath praxis, and texts which show the importance of sabbath in relation to other holy days have been utilised. Texts which refer to the sabbaths of the land, or sabbatical years, have not been included, nor texts which use sabbath as a dating reference.

Where comparisons have been made between the sabbath and other holy days, or where sabbath occurs in word pairs with other

¹² Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, p. xvii.

¹³ Lewis, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, III, pp. 138-66.

¹⁴ For example, many writers with a confessional viewpoint towards sabbath, refer to it with a capital letter as 'Sabbath'. Similarly the Jewish, Christian or humanist world-view of the author can sometimes be known from personal knowledge or from attitudes expressed in the work.

holy days, or in lists with other days, attention has been paid to any discernible evaluation of the sabbath in relation to the other days. For example, if there is a general heading and then a list of days, the position of the other days in the list can tell us something about their relative importance in the mind of the writers of that text.

New moon has been singled out more particularly for the purposes of comparison with the sabbath because it is another holy day that occurs regularly throughout the year, rather than once only like the great pilgrim feasts. New moons can, like the sabbaths, occur in the texts as date markers, as well as holy days with religious observance, and the occurrences as dates have been ignored. The fact that sabbath and new moon are alike in the two attributes of recurring regularly through the year, and of being treated as religious occasions, allows a comparison of the religious importance of these two days to be made from details given about them in terms of actions undertaken and rituals or sacrifices carried out. These details can then be compared with what is required on the annual feasts. Then, if the activities to be undertaken are spelled out for all the holy days, and these activities are similar but varied, it becomes possible to grade the days in order of status in the life of the religious community that produced that text, and to determine whether there was worship on the sabbath.

Texts about prayer have also been surveyed in order to discover what part prayer played in sabbath practice.

WORK ON THE WRITINGS OF PHILO AND JOSEPHUS

The Loeb editions of these writers have been used, and their indices. But special care has been taken to notice how certain key words have been translated in the writings of Philo and Josephus. For instance, where translators have rendered the words προσευχή or συναγωγή as 'synagogue', I have drawn attention to this and, wherever these sections have been quoted, replaced their translations with 'prayer-house' or 'meeting-house' for προσευχή, and 'gathering' or 'conventicle' for συναγωγή. If the word συναγωγή has occurred in the Greek, then I have echoed it with the translation 'synagogue'.

Zeitlin summarises the distinctions very well when he says:

The word synagogue in the sense of a Jewish house of worship is derived from the Greek συναγωγή meaning assembly. The word is found very frequently in the Septuagint, but not in the sense of house of worship. The words קהל עדה, assembly, are translated as συναγωγή, while בית תפלה in the Septuagint is translated as προσευχή, house of worship in the Greek language.¹⁵

And Leon, writing about Rome in the time from the first century BCE to the third century CE has a similar expression of the difference between the two terms:

The term 'synagogue' (Greek συναγωγή, Latin *synagoga*) was used properly of the congregation itself, while the place of worship was generally known as a *proseucha* (προσευχή).¹⁶

¹⁵ Zeitlin, 'Origin', pp. 72-73.

¹⁶ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 139.

Many writers have, on the contrary, proposed the equation of these two terms,¹⁷ but I am not convinced that that does justice to the data unless account is taken of the different dates and geographical locations at which the different terms prevail. I have a greater admiration for those who take time to explain the problems involved fully and well,¹⁸ less for those who try to make some distinctions but leave the final picture ambiguous,¹⁹ and find it difficult to make use of the writings which ignore the existence of the difficulties altogether.²⁰

Notable among these, and frequently referred to, is Hengel's essay on prayer-houses and synagogues.²¹ He is looking for similarities between προσευχαί and συναγωγαί, so that is what he finds, and he minimises the differences. I pursue the opposite approach and am unable to harmonise the two completely as I have become aware of the points of distinction between them.

WORK ON GRAECO-ROMAN AUTHORS

The writings of non-Jewish and non-Christian secular writers, often described as pagan authors,²² have been explored as a *separate* source reflecting the knowledge that another group of intelligent

¹⁷ Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, II, pp. 104-105; Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 341.

¹⁸ See, for example, Grabbe, 'Synagogues', pp. 401-403; Kee, 'Transformation', pp. 1-24; Hoenig, 'City-Square', pp. 451-53.

¹⁹ See, for example, Rivkin, 'Ben Sira', pp. 350-54; Rajak, 'The Jewish Community', pp. 10-11, while dealing adequately with the range of possible meanings of the term 'synagogue' leaves the picture about προσευχαί unclear, even implying that its meaning is not ambiguous.

²⁰ See, for example, Kubo, 'Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period', pp. 66-67; Rowland, 'Sabbath Observance', pp. 51-53; Maier, *Zwischen den Testamenten*, pp. 240-44.

²¹ Hengel, 'Proseuche und Synagoge'.

²² I prefer to describe these authors as secular, because they were writing for their livelihood. I do not wish to use the word 'pagan' to describe their religious observance for, to them, it was the most appropriate religion of the time.

observers had of the Jews and their religious practices. I have chosen to identify the particular facts and ideas that they knew or described, when writing about Jews; that is, *their* perception of what they saw Jews doing, and of what they heard Jews saying.

Thereafter, it has been possible to compare their perception with Jewish and Christian perceptions of the same events, institutions and practices.

WORK ON EARLY CHRISTIAN AUTHORS

Because of the Christian apologists' adoption of an alternating and contrastive style of descriptions and arguments, repeatedly comparing the 'bad, old Jewish' ways, with the 'new, enlightened Christian' ones, whether overtly or by implication, we can expect aspects of Jewish religious life to be placed in an unfavourable light alongside the same aspects of Christian religious life. Any issues on which rhetorical points could be gained were assiduously addressed by the Christian apologists, and I have looked for such references to sabbath practice, or sabbath worship, in their writings.

WORK ON THE MISHNAH

The Mishnah has been studied in the editions of Danby and Blackman to find what prescriptions it gives about sabbath behaviour, either about things to be done or things to be avoided.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

SABBATH

For the purposes of this study, I have accepted that the sabbath is a day which recurs hebdomadally throughout the year, with no breaks in that rhythm. Therefore, I have not included any discussion of the origin of the sabbath, or of the origins of its name. These matters are amply dealt with elsewhere.²³

WORSHIP

I have regarded as worship a voluntary gathering of people, which has as its purpose adoration of a particular named deity.²⁴ Prayer and singing of psalms, exhortations to follow the commands of the deity as understood by the believing community—all these count as worship. Community business, discipline sessions and political arguments do not. Reading, studying and explaining sacred texts I do not regard as worship, unless given a place in a planned session of worship. Otherwise I regard them as educational, or as serving the purpose of preserving and strengthening group identity, but not as worship activities.

SABBATH WORSHIP

As worship in the form of prayers took place on weekdays, even if the same prayers were to be carried out on sabbath that would not *necessarily* represent sabbath worship. And while individual prayer

²³ See, for example: North, 'Sabbath', p. 780; Andreasen, *Sabbath*, pp. 93-121; Dressler, 'Sabbath', pp. 22-24.

²⁴ See also Introduction; Rattray, 'Worship'; and the section 'Worship' in *Concise Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 331-32.

is undoubtedly worship, only organised communal prayer on the sabbath will be considered here to be an indication of sabbath worship. A specific relationship of the communal prayer activity to the seventh day would be necessary before prayer on the sabbath could be properly described as sabbath worship.

Similarly, a description of any other particular worship activity, specific to the sabbath, e.g., the singing of a particular psalm on the sabbath day, or the offering of a particular sabbath sacrifice, would indicate an intended worship event peculiar to the sabbath, although it might apply only to priests and not to the common people.

Admittedly, lack of descriptions of sabbath worship cannot be regarded as definite evidence that sabbath worship did not happen. But even more so, the lack of evidence *cannot* support a definite conclusion that worship *did* take place.

JEW

By Jew I mean a member of the Jewish community, in Palestine or in the Diaspora towns and cities, born into a Jewish household, and following the beliefs and practices of that faith, current at the time. Males, females and children can be included in this grouping, but the texts more usually mention adult males.

ESSENES AND QUMRAN COVENANTERS

I shall regard the Essenes as described by Philo and Josephus to be one group of Jews whose activities and beliefs were recorded in different places and at different times. But I shall not regard the Qumrân community as being, necessarily, Essenes. I am happier to

follow the views expressed by Talmon, that while there are important affinities between the two groups, identifying them takes insufficient account of 'telling differences' between the groups.²⁵

SYNAGOGUE

The word synagogue can have two meanings and it is vital for the purposes of this study to keep these meanings separate and distinct whenever that is possible.

What appears to be the basic meaning of the word is the group of people, the adult, and usually the male, Jews of the community, who met together to discuss matters of concern to them and who made community decisions and carried them out. That meaning can be found in the gospels and in the catacomb inscriptions of Rome. The secondary meaning seems to have been that of a building in which Jews met for prayer, for reading Torah and for carrying out community business.²⁶ The modern-day view of synagogues as buildings where God is worshipped is not necessarily mirrored in the texts of the ancient world.

In the texts about synagogues, descriptions of doorways, steps, slabs with inscriptions, threat or actual perpetration of burning to the ground, etc., will be taken as providing evidence of a building. Phrases such as 'entering' or 'sitting down in', or 'teaching in' a synagogue will not be regarded as necessarily implying a building, with the proviso that they may indicate a building.

²⁵ Talmon, 'Diversification of Judaism', pp. 16-43, esp. pp. 35-36. On the evidence linking the Qumrân community with Josephus' Essenes, see Yadin, *War Scroll*, pp. 74-75, 200-201.

²⁶ A building is always subsequent to the thought and plans of the people who build it.

Whether the group, ‘synagogue’, would meet only in a building called a ‘synagogue’, or in a building of another name, for example in a προσευχή, or in a room in someone’s house, is also regarded as an open question.

PRAYER-HOUSE/MEETING-HOUSE

The προσευχαί were the prayer-houses of the Diaspora Jews in the many provinces of the Mediterranean world, and especially in Egypt, where this name for a type of building is well attested in inscriptions and papyri from the third century BCE, as well as in the writings of Philo. Josephus uses the term in one piece of his writings—in his description of the Jewish meeting-house in Tiberias.

The Latin word *proseucha* will be regarded as having an identical meaning to the Greek προσευχή, and the criteria for regarding a προσευχή as a building are identical with those listed above for synagogue buildings.

ATTENDING SYNAGOGUE

Many standard works use this catch-all phrase without making clear what may or may not be inferred from it. As far as I can determine, a person attended the synagogue (whether group or building) to listen to political discussions, to join in the discussions, to present a case, to attack, verbally or physically, a fellow member for some misdemeanour, to defend himself²⁷ against attack, as well as for daily prayer, sabbath readings of the law and discussion sessions, or services on festivals and fast days. The use of the phrase could

²⁷ I have found no details of women participating in these activities.

therefore imply all of these or some of these or perhaps mean only one of these possibilities. It is important in this study to delineate the meanings of such phrases much more tightly. Thus where clarity of meaning exists, it will be pointed out; and where ambiguity exists, it also will be pointed out.

PRAYER AND DAILY PRAYER

Prayer is often mentioned in the texts and is accepted in this study as a worship activity. Evidence of communal prayer is here regarded as evidence of a service of worship taking place.

The word 'daily' used of sacrifices means seven days per week, and the cultic calendars usually describe extra sacrifices for the sabbath, but it is not clear what the word 'daily' used of prayer means. Could it be all days other than sabbath, on which other prayers might be said? Could it be every day, but with a different set of prayers being used on the sabbath? Could it be either a private or a communal activity?²⁸ Clear answers to these questions will be looked for in the texts.

For sabbath worship to be proven by means of descriptions of prayer on the sabbath, one would need to be convinced that the prayers in question were specially offered because it was the sabbath day or were being offered at a service that was taking place because the day was the sabbath. Prayers on the sabbath are worship on the sabbath, but they do not constitute sabbath worship unless they have the stated purpose of worship especial to sabbath.

²⁸ Ferguson, *Early Christianity*, p. 459.

CHRISTIANS

Christians are regarded in this study either as a particular group of Jews who were in dispute with other Jews, or as people who were converts to a 'new' religion from other world views current in the Roman Empire.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

In this study Christian worship will not be assumed to have arisen out of Jewish worship in the synagogue. This make use of certain standard works difficult as that assumption underlies much of their discussion.²⁹

NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

The phrase 'New Testament times' will be avoided in this thesis as it creates unnecessary confusion and obfuscation in the mind of the reader. Some scholars use it to mean the time of Jesus and Paul, while others use it to mean the time of writing of the New Testament documents. As will become apparent, these two positions appear to me to be separated quite widely both temporally and culturally, perhaps by the passage of as much as a hundred years. However, there are scholars who take the time of writing of the gospels to be very close to the time of Jesus, perhaps at a time similar to the date of Paul's letters in the middle of the first century CE, and they can, therefore, with less discomfort regard the picture portrayed by the gospels as closely reflecting the situation in Jesus' lifetime.

²⁹ See particularly 'Worship', *Concise Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 332; Snaith, 'Worship' p. 544; Ferguson, *Early Christianity*, p. 457.

But others, who believe the time difference to be greater, feel that the changes taking place in the religious and cultural environment at that time were very great. From that perspective, holding a view that regards the two situations as essentially the same does actual damage to the desired aim of understanding what happened in the religious life of both the Jewish and the emergent Christian communities. I will therefore regard the issue of similarity or difference between the Jewish community at the time of Jesus and the Jewish/Christian community at the time of writing of the gospels as still under discussion.

DATES FOR THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

These matters are dealt with by experts in most commentaries and some will be cited here in order to indicate the range of possible dates for each text. I tend to prefer the latest possible date as this allows early material to be included yet also allows later reflection to be incorporated. Many scholars wish to endorse the earliest dates, believing that this will mean that the texts are closer to the events they describe and *as a result of that* will give more historically accurate descriptions. I can agree that the more times a text is edited, the more likely it is to be altered from the original, but what I cannot agree with is the hypothesis that the early text will be *of necessity* more historically accurate. For if persuasion rather than historical accuracy was always the aim of these texts, then earlier texts can have no more credibility as a historical source about the events they describe. Each text in its turn is the most credible witness to the community that produced that particular text.

In the dating of Matthew scholars tend to divide on the point of whether the destruction of Jerusalem is in the author's past as history³⁰ or Jesus' future as prediction.³¹ Thus dates of 65–75 CE are favoured by some,³² late 60s to early 80s by others,³³ and 80–100 CE by others.³⁴

Mark's dates are often arrived at by consideration of the possibilities for Matthew, and a few years earlier are suggested. Thus Bacon posits a few years either side of 80 CE.³⁵ Others decide on a few years on either side of 75 CE,³⁶ or 70 CE,³⁷ or possibly as early as 65–67 CE.³⁸

Luke–Acts is usually given a combined dating. Examples of early datings are around 70 CE (Marshall),³⁹ and pre-64 CE (Bruce).⁴⁰ Later datings are also given, 115–130 CE by O'Neill,⁴¹ and the middle of the second century by Townsend, from literary comparisons between Acts and the Pseudo-Clementine writings and the works of Justin, but he concedes that the date of Luke–Acts 'cannot be determined conclusively because of a lack of evidence'.⁴² Lüdemann describes Luke as having 'belonged to the third Christian generation'.⁴³ A popular date is around 80–85 CE.⁴⁴

³⁰ Schweizer, *Matthew*, p. 15.

³¹ Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 599.

³² Allen, *Matthew*, p. lxxxiv; Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 599, chooses 65–67 CE.

³³ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, p. clxvii.

³⁴ Bacon, *Matthew*, pp. 63–73; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I, pp. 127–38.

³⁵ Bacon, *Matthew*, pp. 63–73.

³⁶ Branscomb, *Mark*, pp. xxix–xxxi.

³⁷ Gould, *Mark*, p. xvii.

³⁸ Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. xxix.

³⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, pp. 33–35.

⁴⁰ Bruce, *Acts*, pp. 21–22.

⁴¹ O'Neill, *Theology*, pp. 1–58.

⁴² Townsend, 'Luke–Acts', p. 58.

⁴³ Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, p. 7.

The gospel of John is dated by Lindars at 85–95 CE, though he maintains that it could have been written later still.⁴⁵ Brown finds the dates of the final form of John's gospel difficult to pinpoint, so suggests between 70 and 85 CE as the earliest possible date of composition and from 100 to 110 CE as the latest date of compilation.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, pp. 53-57.

⁴⁵ Lindars, *John*, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁶ Brown, *John*, pp lxxx-lxxxvi.

2. SABBATH AND NEW MOON: THE HEBREW BIBLE

INTRODUCTION

It is a commonplace of biblical studies that the sabbath in ancient Israel was a day of rest and a day of worship. Typical comments are:

Sabbath was a 'cornerstone of religious practice' in ancient Israel.¹

Since the exile (and partly even beforehand) *worship* had formed an essential part of the image of the sabbath.²

[T]he biblical view is unequivocal: the Sabbath originated in Israel as God's special institution for His people.³

The centre of their religious life was the synagogue, where they held services without sacrifices on the Sabbath.⁴

But these comments are assumptions, which beg various questions, and therefore, do not merit our assent. They imply that Jews had special sabbath activities as opposed to concentrating on sabbath rest. They assume that 'ancient Israel' provided a uniform religious experience for all Jews living in the land. They assume a knowledge of who was actually worshipping, and of what their worship might consist.

Because these and similar assertions have been made without adequate comparison with what the texts actually say, this chapter

¹ Glatt and Tigay, 'Sabbath', p. 888; Morgenstern, 'Sabbath'.

² Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 53-54; cf. the views of Clements, *God and Temple*, p. 130; Andreasen, *Sabbath*, pp. 251-254; Greenberg, 'Sabbath'; Ferguson, *Early Christianity*, p. 441; 'Sabbath' in *Concise Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 273, but note the opposite conclusion on p. 332.

³ Dressler, *Sabbath*, p. 23, see also pp. 21-42.

⁴ Otzen, *Judaism in Antiquity*, pp. 56-57, speaking of Diaspora Jews.

will take a closer look at the textual evidence about the impact of the sabbath and other holy days in the lives of the Israelite community.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF ISRAELITE WORSHIP

In order to make a study of specific religious practices in the Israelite community, distinctions must be made between texts which speak of observing the sabbath and those which speak of worship on festal days, between texts which describe private devotions and those which refer to Temple worship, and between texts which detail the religious life of Temple personnel and those narrating the religious life of ordinary people.

There is no *general* picture of Israelite worship to be discovered; different activities are required in different locations, home or Temple, from different groups of people, laity or priests. Different texts describe different gatherings and practices. In *historical reality* the different groups could show their reverence for the sabbath by special behaviour, and in *the texts* these behaviours could be described.⁵

Sabbath observance means the cessation of work and trading, which is repeatedly required in the Hebrew Bible.⁶ There is no lack of clarity about the command to do no work on the sabbath. The biblical sabbath was a weekly day of rest, apparently observed by Jewish communities at least from the post-exilic period.⁷ The Hebrew Bible describes a sabbath of rest for the ordinary people,⁸ but for the priests

⁵ With the caveat that the writers of a text have power over what it says, and may be biased in their descriptions, to a greater or lesser degree.

⁶ Exod. 20.10; 31.14, 15; 35.2; Lev. 16.29, 31; 23.3; Deut. 5.13, 14; Jer. 17.22, 24.

⁷ Andreasen, *Sabbath*, pp. 235-36.

⁸ Harrelson, 'The Religion of Israel', p. 343.

of the Jerusalem Temple it was a day, among other days, on which they carried out religious duties.

It is not made clear in the texts whether there was sabbath worship for ordinary members of the community. So, many scholars fill that narrative gap from what is described for priests, rulers and populace on a variety of religious occasions described in the texts. Thus, it is often stated that psalm singing was a part of the people's worship and that it took place, therefore, on the sabbath day. There are, however, no texts which describe such psalm singing.

Another common form of worship, prayer, is similarly not referred to at all in terms of worship on sabbath, but is rather a personal activity which can take place anywhere, not excluding a holy site, e.g., Hannah's prayer at the shrine in Shiloh (1 Sam. 1, 2), which took place on Elkanah's annual visit to worship and sacrifice there. But this too tells us nothing about activities on the sabbath.

Sacrifice as a worship activity occurs in the narrative about Moses' request to Pharaoh, to let the Hebrews go a three days' journey into the wilderness, so that they can sacrifice to God.⁹ As with the Elkanah story, this text clearly expects an understanding by both the characters in the story, and the reader, that sacrifice is a valid and customary way of worshipping the Hebrews' God. But no further details are given about the nature and execution of the sacrifices.

Similarly, in the book of Job,¹⁰ there is an indication that he could carry out sacrifices to cleanse his whole family in the sight of the Lord, lest they should have sinned inadvertently. And Elijah puts the prophets of Ba'al to shame when he totally eclipses their efforts at

⁹ Exod. 3.18; 5.3.

¹⁰ Job 1.5.

sacrificing a bull.¹¹ But these sacrificial actions of local leaders seem later to have been replaced by centralised worship in the Temple cult, with the priests taking over the role of leader acting on behalf of the people. Thus there are in the Hebrew Bible cultic calendars which provide details about the Temple sacrifices which were part of the worship there on special days.

By worship, I understand a planned activity, whereby people of similar beliefs carry out similar rites and rituals in order to pay homage, to a specific, deity. Worship, may be carried out individually or in groups, silently or aloud, with singing, dancing, music, reading or reciting of sacred texts, hymns, prayers and blessings, or by sacrificing plants and animals. Instructions for, or descriptions of, these types of activity in the texts will be regarded as evidences of worship either expected of, or carried out by, the Jewish community.

TEXTS ABOUT THE SABBATH

The small amount of textual material that describes sabbath activities will now be summarised, showing that the holy day sabbath appears in only fifteen books of the Hebrew Bible.¹²

In the Pentateuch, the sabbath is referred to in Exodus fourteen times. All these references are to the cessation of work on the sabbath there is nothing about worship. The picture is similar in Leviticus with eight references concerned with appropriate sabbath observance. The sabbath is also mentioned in the cultic calendar in Leviticus 23

¹¹ 1 Kgs 18.

¹² Exod., Lev., Num., Deut., 2 Kgs, 1 & 2 Chr., Neh., Ps. 92, Isa., Jer., Lam., Ezek., Hos., Amos. Sabbath is not mentioned at all in twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible: Gen., Jos., Judg., Ruth, 1 & 2 Sam., 1 Kgs, Ezra, Esth., Job, Prov., Eccl., Song, Dan., Joel, Obad., Jon., Mic., Nah., Hab., Zeph., Hag., Zech., Mal.

but without any directions for worship or sacrifice on the sabbath. The book of Numbers has one reference to the sabbath regarding an infringement of sabbath laws, and in Numbers 28 and 29 there is another cultic calendar, where the sabbath sacrifice is described as an implied doubling of the daily offering. This material will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Then, in Deuteronomy the sabbath is spoken of three times in the explanation of the fourth commandment.

The next book to refer to the sabbath is 2 Kings where there is the question framed by the Shunamite's husband which links new moon and sabbath as days worth visiting a shrine in search of the holy man, days when he would be there.

There are also four references regarding guard rotas at the king's house and their change-over on the sabbath.¹³ And later in the same book there is one sabbath reference which is 'almost impossible to understand'.¹⁴

The covered portal for use on the sabbath that had been built inside the palace, and the outer entrance for the king he [Ahaz] removed from the house of the Lord. He did this because of the king of Assyria. (2 Kgs 16.18, NRSV)

Because of the 'inner-Hebrew difficulties' commentators cannot provide coherent translations and have to use 'a variety of interpretations' and analogies from other texts to write something intelligible to the modern reader,¹⁵ though still not particularly clear.

¹³ 2 Kgs 11.5-8.

¹⁴ Nelson, *Kings*, p. 227.

¹⁵ Montgomery, *Kings*; p. 462.

And the covered-way of the Sabbath that he built in the house (i.e. the Temple), and the king's entry outwards he turned about in/to the house of YHWH.¹⁶

The Sabbath structure which they had built in the house (temple? palace?) and the royal entrance to the outside he reorientated in regard to the house of the Lord because of the king of Assyria.¹⁷

And the barrier of the sabbath which they had built in the Temple and the king's entrance into the court he removed from the Temple of Yahweh because of the king of Assyria.¹⁸

Gray interprets the reference as indicating a barrier or grille into the Temple which would admit the king on special occasions similar to what is described for the prince in Ezekiel's vision of the restored Temple (Ezek. 46), but Montgomery repeats the explanations of Rashi and Kimchi that some sort of sabbath shelter is intended, perhaps for the guard. However, no matter which interpretation we adopt, this text supplies no information about sabbath worship practice either for king or commoner.

1 Chronicles mentions the sabbath twice in connection with preparation of showbread on sabbath by the Kohathites, and once in a list of days for burnt offerings. In 2 Chronicles we find three references to the guard duty on the sabbath—but none to the covered portal. There are also three lists of days (including sabbath) suitable for burnt offerings, one of which suggests that the king provided the sacrificial items (31.3).

¹⁶ Montgomery, *Kings*, p. 462, abridged.

¹⁷ Nelson, *Kings*, p. 227.

¹⁸ Gray, *Kings*, p. 635.

Nehemiah 9.14 speaks of the sabbath being made known to Israel by God, then twice in ch. 10 and ten times in ch. 13 we find the sabbath spoken of in terms of restrictions on business transactions, in rules angrily promulgated to ensure sabbath observance by the community and co-operation by outsiders who otherwise would have wished to trade on that day as other days.

In the book of Psalms only Ps. 92 is described in its title as 'a song for the Sabbath Day' and there are no other references to the sabbath in the psalms.

In the prophetic books, the book of Isaiah has several references to sabbath. There is a text (1.13-14) at the beginning of the collection, which links new moon, sabbath, assemblies and appointed feasts as being occasions when God is displeased by what goes on.

In Isaiah 56 there are three references dealing with avoiding profanation of the sabbath and in ch. 58 two about proper enjoyment of the sabbath, although these do not include any specific references to worship. And at the end of the Isaianic collection there is one text which does imply that worship (שִׁחָה) before Yahweh by all flesh, on new moon and sabbath, will be part of the delights of the New Age (66.23).

In the book of Jeremiah, the obloquy on carrying burdens on the sabbath in ch. 17 contains all six references in that book, and Lam. 2.6 has one retrospective and mournful comment on the loss of the sabbath and appointed feasts, but the voice does not make clear what it is exactly that has been lost.

Ezekiel 20–23 has nine references to 'my sabbaths' with respect to their profanation, the phrase appearing rhythmically punctuating

the text, like a refrain. Chapter 46 has two references to the sabbath, one about the people of the land worshipping (שָׁחָה) Yahweh at the gate of the inner court of the future, restored temple. The other reference lists the burnt offerings to be made by the prince on that day, and there are also four references to the sabbath in association with other holy days (44.24; 45.17; 46.1, 3).

In Hosea the sabbath appears once (2.11) in a list of holy days, that are going to be obliterated by Yahweh, and Amos has one reference to sabbath and new moon in connection with the suspending of trading on these days (8.5).

Thus in the Hebrew Bible most of the references to the sabbath are about avoiding working on the sabbath. And there is the enigmatic reference to the 'use on the sabbath' of a special entrance to the Temple from the palace. But the only times that the word 'sabbath' is used in the Hebrew Bible in terms of actual worship to be carried out by priests on the sabbath are in details of the sabbath sacrifice at Numbers 28.9-10 and in the title of Psalm 92. In Ezekiel 46, in a vision of a glorious and perfect temple cult some time in the future, the burnt offerings to be made on the sabbath by the prince are detailed and the people of the land are directed to worship at one of the temple gates. Unfortunately, this sole reference specifically about the worship of ordinary people in the whole Hebrew Bible is couched in the language of the prophetic vision, and it is not at all clear what it means or even to whom it refers. Apart from this one enigmatic text, there are no texts about regular sabbath worship for the ordinary worshipper.

TEXTS ABOUT PRAYER

None of the texts about prayer in the Hebrew Bible refers to prayer taking place on the sabbath. None refers clearly to communal prayer. One (Isa. 1.15) may refer to massed individual or communal prayer, and will be discussed below. Many refer to a king, prophet, patriarch or other leader, wise man or priest, praying to God. The anonymous voice of Psalms, as also of Lamentations, speaks of prayer.¹⁹ And some texts refer to ordinary people praying to God about what matters to them—such as childlessness. And two groups are described as praying to beings or idols other than God.²⁰

Of the kings, David, Solomon, Hezekiah and Manasseh pray.²¹ The prophets Moses, Samuel, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, and Habakkuk, all pray to God.²²

Among the leaders of the Israelites, Ezra and Nehemiah pray as leaders,²³ Abraham prays for Abimelech's healing,²⁴ and Isaac prays that Rebekah will conceive.²⁵

Job,²⁶ Daniel,²⁷ and the writer of Proverbs²⁸ pray to God, as do priests,²⁹ on their own, or accompanied by Levites,³⁰ or a single

¹⁹ Pss. 4.1; 5.2; 6.9; 17.heading, 1; 32.6; 35.3, etc; Lam. 3.8, 44.

²⁰ Isa. 16.12; 44.17; 45.20.

²¹ 2 Sam. 7.27; 1 Kgs 8–9, and parallels (1 Chr. 17.25; 2 Chr. 6–7); 2 Kgs 19 and parallels (2 Chr. 32); 2 Chr. 30.18; 2 Chr. 33.

²² **Moses:** Exod. 8.29; 32.32; 34.9; Num. 11.2; 14.17, 19; 21.7; Deut. 3.25; 9.20, 26; **Samuel:** 1 Sam. 7.5; 8.6; 12.19, 23; **Elisha:** 2 Kgs 4.33; 6.17, 18; **Isaiah:** 2 Kgs 19 and parallels (2 Chr. 32); 2 Chr. 30.18; 2 Chr. 33; **Jeremiah:** Jer. 7.16; 11.14; 14.11; 29.7, 12; 32.16; 37.2; 42.2, 4, 20; **Jonah:** Jon. 2.1, 7; 4.2; **Habakkuk:** Hab. 3.1.

²³ Ezra 10.1; Neh. 1.4, 6, 11; 2.4; 4.9.

²⁴ Gen. 20.7, 17.

²⁵ Gen. 25.21.

²⁶ Job 16.17; 21.15; 22.27; 24.12; etc.

²⁷ Dan. 6.10; 9.3, 4, 17, 20, 21.

²⁸ Prov. 15.8, 29; 28.9.

²⁹ Ezra 6.10.

³⁰ 2 Chr. 30.27.

Levite.³¹ Two ordinary people are described as praying. They are Abraham's servant,³² and Hannah.³³

There is also a possible reference in Isa. 1.15, to prayer by the males of the Israelite community. The text refers to those who 'stretch out their hands' in God's courts. The possibility that this means communal prayer in the Temple arises because stretching out one's hands is a description of prayer in Ps. 143.6, and because the phrase in Isa. 1.12, 'when you appear before me', has verbal similarities with 'do not appear before me empty-handed' in the instructions in Exod. 23.15 and 34.20 about attending the three pilgrim festivals. But it appears to me that this is not necessarily the meaning of the text and it could be referring to the actions or prayers of the priests in the Temple.

So, in spite of the profusion of references to individuals praying, the prayers are never described as taking place on the sabbath, and are never clearly described as communal prayer by Jews as part of an act of celebration or worship.

DISCUSSION ABOUT SABBATH WORSHIP AND PRAYER

The information that has been gathered from reading the Old Testament, makes it very hard to follow the views expressed by Clements that the 'expatriated Jews in Babylon had learnt to worship as best they could in their own homes' and that 'the existence of regular sabbath worship, which was practised by the faithful nucleus of the exiles ... could not have left the people with the feeling that God

³¹ Neh. 11.17.

³² Gen. 24.12.

³³ 1 Sam. 1-2.

had utterly deserted them'.³⁴ One has the sensation of being swept along by his convictions rather than being convinced by his arguments. He believes and leads his readers to believe that the Old Testament texts describe people worshipping on the sabbath, but there are no texts that do that.

Presenting the opposing position, Talmon rejects the scholarly claim that 'synagogue and communal prayer came to replace the Temple and animal sacrifice' because, as he states, the 'factual evidence adduced in support of this theory is pitifully slim; one might say that it is non-existent'.³⁵

Talmon pens a scathing exposé of those scholars who write about what they believe in, in spite of not finding evidence of it. In this instance, he refers to a belief in an ongoing tradition of prayer in the Jewish community in exile in Babylon. He concludes that scholars, having been unable to 'visualize a community, and a Jewish community at that, which existed for ... at least several generations, without any tangible form of institutionalized worship', have, therefore, created the image of Diaspora Jews worshipping by means of prayer in synagogues. This is a helpful outline of the way suggestions or hypotheses become embedded in the scholarly consciousness as explanations and facts about Jewish worship.

He defines institutionalized prayer as 'safeguarding the continuous, slow moving relationship between the worshipper and his God', and believes that such prayer 'is a prime socializing factor of a given group'.³⁶ He states that the 'precise beginning of

³⁴ Clements, *God and Temple*, p. 130.

³⁵ Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', p. 270.

³⁶ Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', p. 266.

institutionalized prayer in Judaism ... yet escapes the knowledge of scholars', and reminds the reader that the law codices of the Hebrew Bible, in the Pentateuch, Ezekiel, Ezra and Nehemiah, give no instructions as to how prayer should be offered.³⁷ He also regards the worship offered by Israel as being primarily offered by priests, in the ambience of holy silence in the Temple, and as not including prayer.³⁸ Prayer had no particular locus; anywhere, including the Temple, was a suitable place for prayer.³⁹ Thus any sabbath prayers by ordinary people would be *ad hoc* and individual, and not made in accordance with custom or tradition.

A similar understanding of the general population's entitlement to, or involvement in, sabbath worship is provided by Haran,⁴⁰ who reads the sabbath texts with a seasoning of scepticism, and comes to the conclusion that the pattern of rites and observances (including the sabbath and new moon) reported by the P source 'cannot originate with the common people, but of necessity is an esoteric prerogative of the priestly family'. He implies that it is this priestly group who concern themselves with the preservation and recording of all religious rites, and supposes that priestly 'ritual takes place in the arcana of the house of God, unseen by the people as a whole'. By the very nature of the activity and the instincts of self-preservation of the group in charge, worship is kept apart and hidden from the common people.

But Haran also holds the seemingly contradictory belief that the populace visited the temple to 'prostrate themselves before the Lord

³⁷ Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', pp. 270-71.

³⁸ Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', pp. 267-68.

³⁹ Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', pp. 26-69.

⁴⁰ Haran, *Temples*, pp. 224, 291, 348.

there on all the holy days all year round'.⁴¹ As evidence for this he adduces Isa. 1.12-15, Ezek. 36.38, Lam. 1.4; 2.7. I am not able to agree that these texts show the people worshipping or prostrating themselves before God in the temple on every possible holy day, but consider the writing to be more rhetorical and idealistic in intention. I believe Haran's reading depends on combining texts which independently refer to different things, for example, some to worship during the three pilgrim festivals, and others to sabbath observance, and some to the role of the priests in Temple services.

Pious Jews would certainly make the journey to the Temple for the three pilgrim feasts and possibly at other times, and prayers would be offered in conjunction with sacrifices in the Temple on sabbaths, new moons and other holy days.⁴² But no details are given of who would say prayers, nor of the content of such prayers, nor of who could hear them or join in.

The reference to the stretching out of hands before God in Isa. 1.15 could be referring to the assembled males of the community who had come the Temple for the great festivals. But there would not be a large percentage of the population praying there on many other occasions, and for each male Jew in Israel such prayer would represent only a small percentage of his life. Also the entitlement of women to such prayers can only be conjectured. And even if the Jerusalem population had the option of offering prayers every week at the Temple on the sabbath, there are no injunctions extant in the text telling them to do so. Belief in the regular practice of communal sabbath prayers cannot be sustained from this one text from Isaiah.

⁴¹ Haran, *Temples*, p. 292.

⁴² Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', p. 267.

There is equally little evidence in the Hebrew Bible for the singing of sabbath psalms, only Psalm 92 having as its title 'A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day', and no other Psalm referring to the sabbath at all. Also, even if psalm singing were a regular feature of worship on holy days (including the sabbath) it is not clear who was singing. There is evidence in Chronicles and Nehemiah that there were teams of Temple singers,⁴³ but whether others could listen, or join in, is never made explicit in the biblical sources. All we can be certain of is that Temple officials sang psalms as part of worship, and possibly a particular psalm on the sabbath. Ordinary worshippers are not described as singing psalms.

Previous writers have gathered and analysed the sabbath material from the Hebrew Bible with a view to understanding the origin of the sabbath and its role in the religious life of Israel. Of these, Andreasen attempts to 'examine the form, content, function, and history of the Sabbath material within the Old Testament'.

He proceeds without distinguishing between sabbath observance and sabbath worship,⁴⁴ but although as a result of his studies of the Hebrew Bible he recognises that 'we have few and only sketchy descriptions of Sabbath keeping in the Old Testament',⁴⁵ and that 'most references to the Sabbath are strangely monotonous and unimaginative',⁴⁶ he does not consider, as I do, that this might indicate a somewhat formulaic writing up of the sabbath into earlier material. Instead he draws the more unadventurous, and in terms of

⁴³ 1 Chr. 6.31-33; 9.33; Neh. 7.1, 44; 11.22.

⁴⁴ Andreasen, *Sabbath*, p. ix.

⁴⁵ Andreasen, *Sabbath*, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Andreasen, *Sabbath*, p. 92.

his own discussion unwarranted, conclusion that the 'Sabbath material frequently antedates its literary formulation'.⁴⁷

Similarly, although in his discussion on the origins of the week and the sabbath Andreassen says, 'We simply do not know precisely why Israel began to celebrate the seventh day as Sabbath, and how she arrived at it',⁴⁸ he repeatedly assumes that the sabbath involved both rest and festal activities, while admitting that such views are based on very meagre evidence.⁴⁹ He allows his unexamined belief that the sabbath was always a day of worship to overturn the valid conclusion, made on the basis of his textual studies, that there is no evidence to support that view.

Presenting an opposing point of view, and displaying an open agnosticism as to the origins of, and practices relevant to both sabbath and new moon is Herbert.⁵⁰ Speaking of feast days, he says of the new moon, 'little is known' and that 'the origin of sabbath is also obscure'. He states that 'the infrequency with which it is mentioned and the lack of information about its manner of observation in the pre-exilic histories and prophets add to our difficulty'. It does indeed.

Also Kraus, in his discussion of the association between the terms new moon and sabbath,⁵¹ notes that there is a great lack of stipulation for worship of any kind on the sabbath as opposed to on the new moon for which there are ritual practices.⁵² In his view the new

⁴⁷ Andreassen, *Sabbath*, p. 92.

⁴⁸ Andreassen, *Sabbath*, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Andreassen, *Sabbath*, pp. 140, 149, 150, 237, 239, 241.

⁵⁰ Herbert, *Worship*, p. 45.

⁵¹ Kraus, *Worship*, pp. 76-88, especially pp. 79, 80, 86.

⁵² Num. 10.10; 1 Sam. 20; Ezek. 46.6. Similar conclusions are noted by Hasel and Murdoch, 'Sabbath in Prophetic and Historical Literature', p. 45, also Kubo, 'Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period', p. 57.

moon was a monthly feast, established early on in the religious life of the families of Israel. But awareness of his lack of success in isolating the origin and nature of the sabbath from the textual material, in particular from his study of the different explanations of the sabbath commandment, leads him to conclude that 'Both the explanations are secondary, but they show how the Old Testament tradition attempted to anchor the sabbath day in the fundamental mighty acts of Yahweh'.

He sees editors or narrators at work here trying to incline the reader towards particular understandings of the sabbath, and states that 'the first fact we have to establish is that the sabbath was not really a feast' and that 'there is no indication of a ritual that might have set the pattern for the day'; it was 'merely a day of rest'. I take him to say: that there were no extra activities peculiar to the sabbath, there were simply regular everyday activities that were avoided on sabbath.

Kraus has made an excellent analysis of the textual data and I completely concur with his conclusions. The texts give so very little information about the sabbath as a day of worship, that responsible comments made on the subject must stress the lack of information, and resist the inclination to synthesise answers from other material.

TEXTS ABOUT NEW MOON

As has been appreciated by Kraus, a useful control on the sabbath material can be applied by making a parallel study of the texts relating to the holy day new moon. Wildberger agrees, remarking that 'Sie gehören zusammen, weil sie regelmässig im Jahresablauf

wiederkehren'.⁵³ He highlights the fact that the two days are similar enough for a comparison to be both valid and useful.

New moon is described as the holy day to be celebrated in the family home in only one story in the Hebrew Bible, in 1 Sam. 20.5-34, which mentions the celebration meal to which Saul invites David.

Instructions for rituals to be employed at the beginnings of months are detailed at Num. 10.10, 28.11-15, 29.6. Trumpet blowing was a feature of new moon celebrations and a sacrifice several times larger than that of the sabbath. Ps. 81.3 also indicates that trumpet blowing was traditional at the new moon. And Ezek. 46.6 instructs the prince to make a burnt offering on both sabbath and new moon—the new moon sacrifice including one bull more than on sabbath—and says that the people of the land should worship at the entrance of the gate on the sabbaths and the new moons.

And in Hosea 5.7 there is a curious, enigmatic reference to the new moon devouring [the people] with their fields.

TEXTS GIVING LISTS OR SEQUENCES OF HOLY DAYS

More evidence about the relative importance of the sabbath and the new moon can be obtained from the lists and sequences of holy days, for by studying them we can discover how the compilers viewed sabbath and new moon in relation to the other holy days. Lists of three or four names can reveal whether the days were always named in a standard order, or whether certain days were privileged in the view of the authors of the text.

⁵³ Wildberger, *Jesaja*, p. 42: 'They belong together, because they recur regularly in the course of the year'.

LISTS WITH FOUR NAMES OF HOLY DAYS

Ezek. 45.17 feasts, new moons, sabbaths, appointed feasts

Hos. 2.11 feasts, new moons, sabbath, appointed feasts⁵⁴

and also relevant for consideration at this point are:

1 Macc. 10.34 feasts, sabbath, new moon, appointed feasts

Jub. 1.14 new moons, sabbaths, festivals, jubilees, ordinances

Jub. 23.19 festivals and months and sabbaths and jubilees

The lists from Ezekiel and Hosea shows the same order of holy days, an order which does not reflect decreasing frequency through the year, or any other obvious systematisation. The list in Ezekiel describes the sacrifices the prince will make in the future restored temple, and in Hosea is the list of days that the Lord will make an end of; so these are not lists one would expect necessarily to be the same. Perhaps this order reflects the relative importance of the days in the minds of the compilers.

That sabbath and new moon change places between the lists in Hosea and Ezekiel and 1 Maccabees is interesting, also that new moon heads the list in the Jubilees text. If relative importance is a criterion of ordering in the lists, then the status of new moon and the status of the sabbath are not stable.

⁵⁴ Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 115: 'the translators of the Septuagint alter these sequences to read ἑορτή, νεομηνία, σάββατα'.

LISTS WITH THREE NAMES OF HOLY DAYS

1 Chr. 23.31	sabbath, new moons, appointed feasts
2 Chr. 2.4	sabbath, new moons, appointed feasts
2 Chr. 8.13	sabbath, new moons, appointed feasts
2 Chr. 31.3	sabbath, new moons, appointed feasts
Neh. 10.33	sabbath, new moons, appointed feasts
Psalms 81.3	new moon, full moon, feast day

and also relevant for consideration at this point are:

Jdt. 8.6	sabbath, new moon, the Israelite feasts
1 Esdr. 5.52	sabbaths, new moons, all solemn feasts
Col. 2.6	festival, new moon, sabbath ⁵⁵
Jub. 2.9	sabbaths, months, feast days
War Scroll col. 2	appointed times, on new moons and on sabbaths
Justin, <i>Dialogue</i> 8	sabbaths, feasts, new moons

Though, as expected, the sabbath is unmentioned in the list of days on which the trumpet is to be blown (Ps. 81.3), it takes pride of place in the sequences of holy days in Chronicles and Nehemiah. That list occurs several times in exactly the same form, which has led to the belief that it was a favourite sequence of the Chronicler.⁵⁶ The same sequence is repeated in other later works of the intertestamental period, but is not followed by Justin. If the position of a named day in the list reveals its importance, he, or Trypho in whose voice these

⁵⁵ This is a quotation of the LXX version of Hos. 2.11, and Ezek. 45.17 (Schweizer, *Colossians*, p. 155).

⁵⁶ Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, pp. 110, 114.

words are said, has little, but still some, respect for the new moon as a holy day.

LISTS WITH PAIRS OR PARALLELISM OF HOLY DAYS

a) new moon/ sabbath

2 Kgs 4.23	neither new moon nor sabbath
Isa. 1.13	new moon and sabbath
Isa. 66.23	from new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath
Amos 8.5	when will the new moon be over ...And the sabbath ...

b) sabbath/ new moon

Ezek. 46.1	on the sabbath day ... on the day of the new moon
Ezek. 46.3	on the sabbaths and on the new moons

c) appointed feasts/ sabbath

Lam. 2.6	appointed feasts and sabbath
Ezek. 44.24	in all my appointed feasts keep my sabbaths holy

d) sabbath/ feasts

1 Macc. 1.45	sabbaths and feast days
2 Macc. 6.6	to observe sabbath or keep the traditional festivals

e) new moon/ appointed feasts

Ezra 3.5	at the new moons and at all the appointed feasts
Isa. 1.14	your new moons and your appointed feasts

Because new moon and sabbath occur together so often in the texts and as the two names are never separated in the lists, but are always adjacent, I shall regard them as a word pair. But it is worth remarking that the order of the names of the two days varies however; when three or more names of holy days come together, sabbath generally precedes new moon, but when the two names come together, new moon generally precedes sabbath.

DISCUSSION ABOUT NEW MOON

It is important to notice that, in the Samuel narrative, new moon is described as an important religious occasion, from which absenting oneself was a serious matter. The family meal was the way the king and his entourage celebrated the new moon. It is not described in any way as an alien or 'Canaanite' practice.

The anxiety of David about the importance of the new moon feast in the story in 1 Samuel throws into relief the total lack of interest in it elsewhere in the narratives of the Old Testament. This lack of interest is odd when one realises that new moon occurs in sixteen other places in the Hebrew Bible linked with one or more other holy days. This number of references to the new moon implies that it was a reasonably well-known feast in Israelite society (cf. a mere five occurrences of the feast of weeks). The alert reader wonders how this discrepancy in attention given to the new moon has arisen. However, for whatever reason, it is only in that narrative that new moon holds centre stage as the sole religious event described.

The text of Hos. 5.7 referring to the new moon devouring the people has caused commentators great problems and the solutions

proposed are quite varied, the emendations proposed being aptly described by Mays as 'creatures of need'.⁵⁷

He gives three possible readings of the verse: first the almost unintelligible MT reading that the new moon/month will devour them, second—following the Greek—that the locust or destroyer will devour them, or third, that in a month's time they will be devoured. Stating another possibility, Harper takes the new moon as being a time reference and rejects the belief that it refers to prevailing cult practices and their corruption, giving as his reason that 'at this time, the new moon did not occupy an important place in the cult'.⁵⁸ This seems a unfounded conclusion which is not backed by any evidence brought by him, nor by my findings about the roles of sabbath and new moon in the Israelite cult.

This particular text from Hosea seems to provide commentators with a focus for venting bias against the idea that new moon was a perfectly respectable Israelite holy day on which God was worshipped in the Temple, many scholars treating new moon as being nothing more than an alien and unworthy festival.

Thus Andersen and Freedman, while following up every other point with greatly detailed arguments and references, merely assert that 'New Moon festivals were important in Canaanite religion', and go on from there to say that 'it would be appropriate if some kind of disaster were to take place at that sacred time'.⁵⁹ They seem to be employing special pleading and using innuendo to create an evil image of the new moon, implying it was some kind of bastardised

⁵⁷ Mays, *Hosea*, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁸ Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, p. 271.

⁵⁹ Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 396-97.

festival. This conflicts with the results of the textual survey undertaken here which shows that new moon was one of many Israelite holy days with attendant rituals. Andersen and Freedman here display a great determination to read this text, by means of intertextual evidence, in the ambience of fertility cultism and as implying punishment for the fruits of harlotry, symbolic or otherwise. But it seems to me that one particular reading of the text is expatiated on while others remain only partially considered.

The same keenness to blame Israel for sexual faithlessness to God, by means of celebrating the new moon, is evident in the commentary of Hauret, who finds that the people have followed a ba'alised cult, as evidenced by the presence of the phrase 'New Moon', and as a result have lost everything.⁶⁰ Similar conviction that the new moon is a manifestation of the 'rites of the sex cult' is held by Wolff,⁶¹ who also ignores the fact that new moon, along with sabbath, crops up in many neutral and harmless expressions about Israel's cultic practice.

The new moon has attracted much unfavourable comment in the secondary literature, but this seems to be out of harmony with the generally equanimous treatment of the festival in the biblical texts. However, these negative views are not the whole picture, and a more positive view of the status of the new moon will emerge from a study of the cultic calendars later in this chapter.

⁶⁰ Hauret, *Amos et Osée*, p. 185.

⁶¹ Wolff, *Hosea*, p. 101.

DISCUSSION ON THE WORD PAIR NEW MOON AND SABBATH

The use of word pairs or the parallel use of two words can present only two types of information about the words so linked to each other. They are either *alike* in some way, or they are in some way being *opposed*.

In 2 Kgs 4.23, Amos 8.5, and Ezek. 46.1, 3 the two days new moon and sabbath are linked together because they are alike. On both days the holy man would be at the shrine, on both days business is suspended, on both days the gate of the Temple court will be open and on both days the people of the land will bow down at that gate. In all these categories of eventuality new moon and sabbath are alike. The naming of the two days side by side is emphasising their similarity.

But it is feasible that in Ezek. 44.24, where the Levitical priests are told to keep 'my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts, and ... keep my sabbaths holy', the two days are being opposed. For what is being asked for on new moon is obedience in carrying out practical actions, while on the sabbath an atmosphere has to be created. This text shows the beginning of the development of an *idea* of sabbath that was different from the *idea* of the other feasts. This could be regarded as a privileging of the sabbath in that particular text.

However, if the relative positions of new moon and sabbath, from places where those two days are paired or paralleled, are counted for the whole Hebrew Bible, the result shows that there are more occasions when new moon precedes sabbath than vice versa. And if we count the occurrences of the two days in the text of the Hebrew Bible we find that new moon occurs more often than sabbath in a ratio of eighteen to fifteen occurrences. Therefore, there is no evidence of

sabbath *dominating* the religious scene in the Hebrew Bible. Or rather the reverse conclusion applies; perhaps the two days had different times and locations of ascendancy on the cultic and liturgical scene.

The occurrence of the phrase ‘new moon and sabbath’ at both the beginning and the end of the book of Isaiah is also interesting. The first occurrence in Isaiah 1 has a negative flavour and the oracle speaks against new moon and sabbath, but the other, in Isa. 66, uses the combination of the two days as a symbol of new hope.

In Isa. 1.13-15, new moon and sabbath are spoken of between texts dealing with God’s disgust over the narratees’ sacrificial practice and with their prayers. The condemnation is non-specific and overwhelming, with the different feast days grouped together indiscriminately. The Lord seems to be blaming throngs of people for coming to celebrate feast days (although the particular word for the pilgrim feasts, *מִלִּים*, is not included in the text). Yet that is apparently their understanding of what he, himself, requires of them.

- 12 When you come to appear before me,
who asked this from your hand?
Trample my courts no more;
- 13 bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.
new moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.
- 14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul
hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.

It is difficult to distinguish any worship practice peculiar to, or prescribed for, the sabbath from the text of this harsh oracle. The voice of the speaker is combining every religious occasion together in a comprehensive condemnation of the cult. And the complaints seem rather to be aimed at the practices of *priests within the cult*, than at the ordinary worshipper. For it is the giving of offerings and incense that are mentioned as examples of what is particularly irritating to the Almighty, and those would be delivered through the hands of the priests.

I agree with Kaiser who regards this oracle as coming from the period of the Second Temple, and as being a 'criticism of the cult', blaming the priests for 'the juxtaposition and combination of conduct which injures the community ... with the festive assemblies'.⁶² There is no criticism of the activities of the ordinary worshippers; the voice of the Lord is castigating those who have the power to change cultic and other practices.

If, however, this text is indeed referring to regular sabbath worship at the Temple by the ordinary Israelites, then it would be the only text in the Hebrew Bible to do so, apart from the reference in Ezekiel's vision to the people of the land worshipping at the gate of the future restored temple, which cannot be a description of current practice. But this one text from Isaiah is not straightforward enough to be used on its own as evidence of regular communal worship by the Israelite populace. As part of a complex of similar texts it could be so used, but there are no others.

⁶² Kaiser, *Isaiah*, pp. 25, 31.

Watts suggests another possible explanation of the text of Isa. 1.13. He sees a correspondence between the reference to new moon and sabbath here and the references to new moon and sabbath in Isaiah 66, where the holy days are part of the joys to come in the future as part of the vision of the New Jerusalem given there.⁶³ The theme of contrast between the new age ahead of the people and what was being experienced at the time is in his view the main force of the oracle. Thus the combination of sabbath with new moon in Isaiah 1 can be seen as a use of this same word pair to transmit the combined concept of perfect response to God. The phrase 'new moon and sabbath' here does not prosaically indicate two distinct types of cultic occasion, but sums up the whole religious relationship between the cult and God and can be employed to show vividly that the whole relationship has gone completely wrong.

And lending some support to the possibility that the word 'sabbath' has become attached to 'new moon' secondarily in this oracle, in order to make an *inclusio* with the same phrase in Isa. 66.23, is the fact that in the interplay of terms in Isa. 1.13b-14a, 'sabbath' is not repeated or paralleled by another term, as new moon and assembly/convocation are. The pattern of repeating and alternating names of holy days would flow more smoothly were the 'sabbath' reference to be removed. Thus the presence of the word 'sabbath' in Isa. 1.13 can be considered secondary, and the original acerbic condemnation would have been aimed at the annual and the monthly Israelite celebrations, with nothing at all being said about

⁶³ Watts, *Isaiah*, p. 21. Also of note is the fact that Watts sees 'New Moon and sabbath' in Isa. 1.13-14 'is one of the earliest designations for the lunar worship calendar' and opines that 'it indicates worship at designated places at new and full moons, i.e. every fourteen days'.

the sabbath as a day on which Israelites worshipped. Then, later, sabbath would be included here to indicate the summing up of the totality of worship by means of the word pair.

An alternate interpretation of Isa. 66.23 claims that the phrase 'from new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath' implies nothing more than the lengthiness of the time scale in the mind of the prophet and the regular nature of the worship to be carried out, rather than specifying that it is on these days that the worship should take place.⁶⁴ But this wrongly ignores the rhetorical freight of the phrase.

Other writers see the text as describing a glorification of worship at the Temple, with the climax of the new creation being renewed sabbath worship.⁶⁵ They hold the view that because sabbath represents the summation of the first creation, it should be celebrated more enthusiastically in the new creation. So, in discussing this theme, Smart feels able to include new moons along with the sabbaths as part of the 'consummation' in the form of 'the coming of all nations ... to participate in the Temple worship'. But although he gives the reason for the presence in the oracle of the sabbath, on which worship is 'the primary observance of a true Israelite', he gives no parallel argument for the new moon being singled out for mention as well.⁶⁶

It looks as if Smart sees in the text something he expected to see, namely the supremacy of sabbath and sabbath worship, and that he has ignored the quite clear coupling of sabbath with new moon in the text. He says that the editor of the book of Isaiah 'bends the prophet's

⁶⁴ Torrey, *Second Isaiah*, p. 475; Volz, *Jesaia*, pp. 295, 299.

⁶⁵ Smart, *Second Isaiah*, pp. 291-92.

⁶⁶ Smart, *Second Isaiah*, p. 291.

greatest thoughts to fit his orthodox schema', a criticism which could, with some measure of justice, be levelled at Smart himself.

Bonnard combines the two interpretations and attempts to eliminate the difficulty which Smart has avoided confronting.⁶⁷ He interprets the phrase about the new moon as meaning from month to month, thus carrying the image of repetition through eternity, and uses the portion of the phrase about sabbath to carry the theme of the theological culmination of both creation and new creation, saying 'de même que la création originelle culminait dans l'institution du sabbat ... de même la création renouvelée culminera dans l'observation renforcée de ce même sabbat'. By this convoluted approach Bonnard preserves both his theology and logic, to his own satisfaction at least.

But none of the scholars remarks on the equality of new moon and sabbath in this text, and that they occur in parallel; that in some sense the two days are comparable, and can be considered together, part of the same complex of ideas, as they are repeatedly elsewhere in the Old Testament, and not at all in opposition as far as the writer of Isaiah 66 is concerned.

Thus, in my judgement, any patent opposition between the two days, is not striking enough in the texts of the Hebrew Bible to allow a definite conclusion as to which day was more important. Evidence on one side of the argument is balanced more or less by evidence to the contrary, and the sometime greater importance of new moon can be observed in the different sacrifices required on the two days in the cultic calendars.

⁶⁷ Bonnard, *Second Isaïe*, pp. 482, 493-94: 'as much as the original creation culminated in the institution of the sabbath, so the renewed creation reaches its peak in the strengthened observance of this same sabbath'.

CULTIC CALENDARS

The three lengthiest sections of text that deal with holy days and the practices required on them, and that could reasonably be expected to express their authors' understandings of these matters are Leviticus 23.2-43, Numbers 28.1-29.39 and Ezekiel 45.13-46.15. The passages share a more or less common understanding of the three annual feasts, similar to the descriptions in Deuteronomy 16, but they differ in the order in which they deal with the individual holy days, in the sacrifices prescribed and even in the selection of the holy days they present. The perspective from which the festivals are viewed in these calendars is that of the group in the Temple who operate the cult. There are no explanations of how the worshippers supply the sacrificial materials.⁶⁸

In Numbers 28-29 the sequence runs as follows: sabbaths, beginnings of months, feast of unleavened bread, feast of weeks, day of atonement, feast of booths. The holy days and their rituals are described.

Leviticus 23 has a similar sequence, except that the holy days are laid out in order of their progression through the year, with a statement about the sabbath interpolated at verse 3 between the general introduction to the appointed feasts and the details for the passover, and an ambiguous reference to the sabbath at verse 38. The sequence is (sabbath), feast of unleavened bread, feast of weeks, first

⁶⁸ In his discussion of sabbath actions as reported in the Damascus Rule and in the Mishnah, Sanders, *Jewish Law*, p. 11 concludes that since sacrificing is characterised as work, only priests were permitted to carry it out on the sabbath on the basis that all the sources 'simply assume that individuals did not present sacrifices on the sabbath'.

day of the seventh month (New Year, day of solemn rest), day of atonement, (sabbath), feast of booths. New moon is not mentioned in this list.

In Ezekiel 45–46 there is another set of instructions for the observance of holy days which deals with them in the order of passover, sabbath, new moon and appointed feasts, but the other two annual feasts are not mentioned by name although the general term ‘feast’ (אָפּ) is there. It is a bit surprising that the same section is also preceded by the list: feasts, new moon, sabbath, and all appointed feasts (45.17), but that sequence is ignored in the section which follows. There is obviously no harmonising of these two blocks, because the list does not function in any way as an announcement of the substance to follow in the rest of the section.

Laying these calendars out side by side shows how little correspondence there is between them. But it is possible to see a seven part-structure in these lists, although it is not totally clear-cut in every case.

LEVITICUS 23	NUMBERS 28–29	EZEKIEL 45–46
appointed feasts	daily	Day of Atonement
sabbath	sabbath	Passover
appointed feasts	new moon	feast (? Weeks)
Passover	Passover	sabbath
First fruits/weeks	weeks	new moon
day of solemn rest	Day of Atonement	appointed feasts
Day of Atonement	Booths	daily
Booths		
appointed feasts/sabbath		
Booths		

The Numbers list has an obvious seven-part structure, with the holy days arranged by decreasing order of frequency in the year. Sabbath occurs at the logical place of second in such a list. The Ezekiel calendar has also a seven-part structure, but one which shows no obvious logic of arrangement. In it, sabbath takes the central position of fourth in the list. The Leviticus text contains seven categories of holy day if one removes the repetitions, and sabbath appears near both ends of the list. The lists have very little in common.

More can be understood if the lists of sacrifices and special instructions given are detailed. Certainly the three calendars are not in agreement about what should happen on the feasts.

NUMBERS 28-29

daily	2 lambs
sabbath	2 lambs, in addition to the regular burnt offering
new moon	2 bulls, 1 ram, 7 lambs and 1 goat
Passover	exactly as new moon and do no work
first fruits	exactly as Passover
1st day of 7th month	as above but blow trumpets and only kill 1 bull
10th day	as 1st day and also afflicting oneself
15th day	do no work, keep a feast for seven days and make an offering
(? booths)	13 bulls, 2 rams, 14 lambs and 1 goat
2nd day of 7	12 bulls, 2 rams, 14 lambs and 1 goat
AND SO ON	decreasing by 1 bull till the 7th day, then
8th day	1 bull, 1 ram and 7 lambs and 1 goat

The presentation in Numbers has all the appearance of being the most regular of the three, the seven sections on holy days following a system of decreasing frequency of occurrence through the year. It is worth noting that the new moon offering is much greater than the

sabbath offering, by many factors of extravagance, and of similar importance to the passover offering.

EZEKIEL 45–46

1st day of 1st month	1 bull
Passover	1 bull, then 7 bulls, 7 rams and 1 goat for 7 days
15th day of 7th month	the same as Passover
sabbath	6 lambs and 1 ram
new moon	1 bull, 6 lambs and 1 ram
appointed feasts	general instructions
daily	1 lamb

The listings in Ezekiel show that sabbath and new moon were days similar in importance to the writer of this material, but with the new moon having a clear edge over sabbath in terms of livestock slaughtered. However sabbath has much more importance than a weekday by the same method of scoring, which was not the case in the Numbers material, and here both sabbath and new moon are of much less importance than passover. But, of course, this prescription refers to the future restored temple.

LEVITICUS 23

appointed feasts	general heading
sabbath	no mention of sacrifice
appointed feasts	general heading
Passover	unspecified offering by fire for 7 days
First fruits	offer 1 lamb
Weeks	offer 7 lambs, 1 bull, 2 rams, 1 goat, 2 lambs
day of solemn rest (first of 7th month)	blow trumpets, do no work, make an offering by fire
Day of Atonement	unspecified offering by fire
Booths	unspecified offerings by fire

A close look at the material in Leviticus reveals two references to the sabbath, but without any content of detail or prescription for sacrifice, which look as if they have been added to an existing cultic sequence. The first describes sabbath as a day of solemn and holy rest and interrupts the preamble to the cultic calendar, which then repeats itself and carries on.

The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the people of Israel, The appointed feasts of the Lord which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed feasts, are these. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work; it is a sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings.' These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them.

The second tucks sabbath into the middle of a reprise of general directions for holy days almost at the end of the calendar, right in the middle of the lists of offerings, apparently in parenthesis to the word, 'day'.

These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the Lord offerings by fire, burnt offerings and cereal offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day; besides the sabbaths of the Lord, and besides your gifts, and besides all your votive offerings, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord.

Sabbath is added to a group of holy days almost at the end of the calendar, on which sacrifices are made, as if the writer was forgetting that sabbath, in this list, doesn't have a set of sacrifices.

There is, in this list, no reference at all to the new moon. Admittedly, on the first day of the seventh month rest, ritual act and sacrifice are laid down, but it is not stated that this is expected to happen on every new moon. New moon has been effectively eliminated from the proceedings; but although sabbath is included, it is without a sacrifice prescription. In this list of feasts the only feast that has a clear explanation of what is to happen to the various attendant flora and fauna is the feast of Weeks.

In contrast with these three cultic calendars, there is what appears to be fragments of yet another in Ezra 3. After the restoration of worship, at the beginning of the seventh month, the cycle of worship on festivals and holy days begins with twice-daily sacrifices. Then they kept the feast of Booths (3.4), then the daily burnt offerings, then 'the continual burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord...':

EZRA 3

daily

Booths

daily

new moons

sacred festivals

What is noteworthy is the fact that sabbath is not mentioned at all in this list, whereas new moon is explicitly named as a day with sacrifices.

Several commentators are troubled by this and believe, from comparison with lists of holy days in 1 & 2 Chron., Neh., Jdt. and 1 Esdr., that sabbath has dropped out of the list in Ezra 3.5 and should

be replaced. Proposing the insertion of 'sabbaths' are Myers and Coggins, but demurring are Blenkinsopp, Williamson and Fensham.⁶⁹

As it stands the block gives more currency to the proposal that some texts honour new moon more than sabbath, while others prefer to give status to the sabbath. In the three main cultic calendars sabbath seems to have less importance than new moon, and it is completely missing from the listing in Ezra.

The cultic details gleaned about new moon activities from these passages show that compared with the sabbath, new moon had at least an equal, if not a greater, importance in the minds of *some* of the biblical writers. The sacrifice was always more magnificent and the trumpet was sounded.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CULTIC CALENDARS

From the gradations of quantities of livestock listed for sacrifice on the different occasions in Numbers 28–29, the writers of the cultic material apparently revered the new moon a great deal more than the sabbath as a festal day similar in importance to the three pilgrim feasts, in fact, equal to Passover. And the sabbath has, in that list, no peculiar group of sacrifices, but merely has an implicit extra dole of the daily offering.

The presentation of the cultic calendar in Ezekiel could, with some justification, be described as ragged, with dates left unclear and sacrifice specifications quite other than in the Pentateuch. Various

⁶⁹ Myers, *Ezra. Nehemiah*, p. 25, Coggins, *Ezra and Nehemiah*; p. 21; demurring at its insertion are: Blenkinsopp, *Ezra–Nehemiah*, p. 98, Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 42, Fensham, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, p. 60.

commentators discuss these differences.⁷⁰ Fisch notes the problems and merely re-iterates rabbinic conjectures for solutions to them. Cooke blames the confusion on editings and updates to existing laws and remarks that the 'writing is somewhat loose'.⁷¹ He believes that 'by the time when the present legislation was promoted, the ancient feasts had changed their character ... the laity assist at a distance, the priests alone carry out the sacrificial rites'.⁷² Zimmerli rehearses the same points but also regards the process at work in the compilation of the Ezekiel text as one of levelling, where the great feasts are brought down to size, becoming less extravagant and more like one another in rituals and requirements.⁷³

These commentators see the editing and reforming activities of groups in power in Israel as the source of the discrepancies and disturbances in the texts, and feel that these groups had the power to change the value and importance of the different feasts as they inscribed them in the biblical texts.

In consideration of the Leviticus passage it must be said that surprise at the placing of sabbath within the sequence of feasts is not new. Baumgarten⁷⁴ describes the rabbinic question as to the intrusion of sabbath details at two places in this section of Leviticus, 'What place has the sabbath in the chapter dealing with festivals?' Certainly, the two pieces about the sabbath seem to jar badly with the rest of the material and seem like later additions to the text.⁷⁵ But why should

⁷⁰ Fisch, *Ezekiel*, pp. 315-19; Cooke, *Ezekiel*, pp. 493-507; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, pp. 480-86.

⁷¹ Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p. 504; note the similarity to the conclusions of Haran above.

⁷² Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p. 505.

⁷³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, II, p. 484.

⁷⁴ Baumgarten, 'The Counting of the Sabbath', p. 278.

⁷⁵ See also comments in Andreasen, *Sabbath*, p. 76.

the sabbath intrude itself in a list of feast days? The rabbi who asked that question must have considered the sabbath to be other than a feast day. And in whose interests would it have been to make the insertion? The editors of the Leviticus text revered the sabbath greatly as a holy day, though not as a feast day with sacrifices, and placed sabbath amongst the feast days, like an outsider being ushered to the head of a queue. This suggests that there was a sabbath-honouring group in Israelite society.

Certainly, the importance of the sabbath in the community that produced the book of Ezekiel has been recognised,⁷⁶ and in chs. 20–23 the concept of profanation of the sabbath is treated, as if the sabbath itself were an entity that could be polluted, rather than implying the pollution of a physical entity, the sanctuary, with physical pollutants such as pig's blood. This ability of the sabbath to be polluted by peoples' actions or intentions is a theme that is developed more fully in the later writings of Maccabees and Jubilees and will be discussed in Chapter 3.

In Ezek. 44.24, also already discussed, there is a possibility of opposition of sabbath to the other feasts in terms of how one is meant to react towards the day as a religious occasion, i.e., there are rituals for the feasts and there should be a proper attitude to the sabbath. This would also reflect a group holding a particular estimate of the value of the sabbath.

Another indication of the increasing importance of the sabbath in some texts is its incorporation into the cultic calendar of Leviticus. There, the new moon was of little or no importance, for it is not given

⁷⁶ Kraus, *Worship*, p. 87.

a place in that particular list, which is remarkable if we take into account the many couplings of the days, new moon and sabbath, throughout the biblical texts. There is also the directly opposite evidence of the shorter cultic calendar reported in Ezra which includes new moon and lacks sabbath. There seems to have been some sort of rivalry or opposition between these two days in the minds of some biblical writers.

So the search for sabbath worship has not been advanced by a study of sacrifices, there being nothing consistent about the sabbath provision; one calendar gives the sabbath the same as the daily offering, one gives it more and two give no details of sacrifice for sabbath at all. In any case, only the *priests* were actually involved in whatever sacrificing was done and it is not clear whether the people were involved in the sacrificial activity in any religious sense.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

All the pieces of evidence presented in this chapter encourage the view that the sabbath did not take pride of place in the religious life of Israel in the period covered by the Hebrew Bible, and that, even if *observed* from earlier times, sabbath only rose to prominence and acquired a set of rituals at a later date and with the influence of a backing group. All the prescriptions for actual and particular behaviour on the sabbath are addressed to cultic officials, and not to the ordinary worshipper—save the implied providing of the material for the sacrifice.

And throughout the Hebrew Bible the sabbath does not have a distinctive role; we find a frequent pairing of sabbath and new moon

which indicates they were, in many situations, considered similar. And in two of the three main cultic calendars new moon has more importance than the sabbath, though not in a consistent way. There is not one straightforward account of what sabbath, ~~nor~~ new moon, should mean in the lives of the common people, even in as simple a matter as the amounts of livestock and goods they should bring to the Temple. Different texts propound different pictures of the pattern and substance of religious practice through the year.

Whether the king had either any sort of privileged access to the Temple (2 Kgs 16.18), or any extra responsibilities in the Temple (2 Chr. 31.3; Ezek. 46) is impossible to determine from the scraps of data provided by the texts of the Hebrew Bible; not least because the accounts are driven by their own agendas and do not set out to give answers to my questions.

And although there are indications that increased attention was given to the sabbath in some post-exilic texts, the late date of a biblical book's compilation does not guarantee that it will concern itself with the sabbath, or even refer to the sabbath, as can be seen from the absence of any mention of sabbath in the books of Daniel, Job or Ezra. Any special attention given to sabbath seems rather to depend on its being of interest to the compilers of the book.

Thus the picture of sabbath for the ordinary Jew, drawn from the Hebrew Bible alone, is of a faithfully observed and revered sabbath of rest, and of a new moon feast day which was heralded by trumpet blowing and possibly celebrated by a family meal. But there are signs that the sabbath of the priests is in transition through the texts, and is in the process of acquiring more importance and, with that, a set of

rituals to be carried out in the Temple, but only there. Only the priests have to carry out extra activities on the sabbath.

3. SABBATH AS SUPREME HOLY DAY: INTERTESTAMENTAL LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the understanding of what the sabbath meant in the religious life of the Jews can be observed by carrying out a study of intertestamental and later texts. The various writers reveal their views of the sabbath in their texts, views of the sabbath as a religious entity with greater power to exact particular human behaviours than was evident in the portrayal of the sabbath in the texts of the Hebrew Bible. Thus some describe a sabbath with more stringent rules governing behaviour and thoughts, some demand from their followers further religious observances, and others require from their community a deeper attitude of reverence for the day itself. The sabbath has become more powerful in one or more of its aspects.

But these developments were not uniform throughout the writings of the period, so the different, although similar, trends can be seen more clearly if data from the Apocryphal and Deutero-Canonical works are presented together as a group, and data from the Dead Sea Scrolls and *Jubilees* are reported separately. Then conclusions can be drawn from the juxtaposition of the different images of sabbath in the lives and thoughts of the different groups of Jews.

And to continue our appreciation of the changing status of sabbath vis-à-vis new moon with the passage of time, occurrences of new moon in these texts will also be recorded and commented on in this chapter.

THE SABBATH IN THE APOCRYPHAL WORKS

In some of these texts the sabbath day has acquired a new character, in that it is no longer merely a day set aside for rest, once a week, but is a special time with some quality of holiness that it possesses intrinsically. This quality causes the sabbath both to affect life on other days as well and to be able in itself to exact more attention than was demanded from the believing community in the Hebrew Bible narratives. The sabbath achieved influence in community life.

But in other apocryphal works, the sabbath is not mentioned at all, even where one might expect it to appear, as in the description of the piety of the young man, Tobit.¹ Also, although Ben Sira records the names of some holy days, and refers to the exalting and hallowing of certain (unspecified) days,² he does not mention the sabbath at all. Ben Sira's lengthy descriptions, in chs. 34–35, of the Temple cult and its sacrifices, and of the proper behaviour of one who keeps the law, make no mention of the sabbath by name.³ The sabbath does not play an obvious part in what goes on in the Temple cult. Ben Sira speaks of sacrifices, offerings of first fruits, of tithes and of prayer, but there is no special day mentioned, apart from the implication that worshippers should attend on the festivals when sacrifices were required. The sabbath is not mentioned as a day for holy activities in the public domain anywhere in Ben Sira.⁴

¹ Tob. 1.3-9.

² Sir. 33.7-13; see also in Chapter 4 a discussion on the lack of references to 'synagogue' in Ben Sira.

³ Rivkin, 'Ben Sira', pp. 331-34.

⁴ Rivkin notes the lack of references to synagogues in this programme of Jewish piety, but he does not comment on the silence about the sabbath.

TEXTS ABOUT THE SABBATH

References to sabbath occur in Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, 1 Esdras. Sabbath is not mentioned at all in any other apocryphal or deuterocanonical books.

In Jdt. 8.4-8, the beautiful and pious Judith is described as living as a widow for three years and four months and during that time she 'fasted all the days of her widowhood, except the day before the sabbath and the sabbath itself, the day before the new moon and the new moon itself, and the feasts and days of rejoicing of the house of Israel'. Apparently, both sabbath and new moon allow freedom from fasting because they are holy days, but both also occasion that freedom on one extra day, the day before.

In 1 Macc. 1.20-50, there is a section of text which angrily describes the proscription of Jewish religious practices by Antiochus Epiphanes. ^{There} the sabbaths are described as having been 'turned into a reproach' (1.39) and 'profaned' (1.43,45). These sabbaths are evidently more than a portion of time set aside for rest, they are religious or holy entities which can be besmirched in some way, as could an altar or shrine, by the actions of outsiders.⁵

In 1 Macc. 2, one group of rebels is pursued by the king's soldiers who aimed to attack them on the sabbath day (2.32). They refused to profane the sabbath day by fighting on it (2.34); they were attacked on it (2.38), and perished. Later in ch. 2, the group of rebels under Mattathias decided to fight on the sabbath day on future occasions (2.41). The same issue is treated again, under Jonathan, in 9.34, 43,

⁵ See also the use of this imagery in Ezek. 20-23, discussed in Chapter 2.

and fighting is again sanctioned.⁶ The importance of keeping the day in the traditional way is set against the importance of many human lives, but the decision to give human lives the priority is not easily made.

The issue of the importance of feast days, sabbaths and new moons and appointed days is addressed in 1 Macc. 10.34. All these days are declared by King Demetrius, in a letter to the Jews, to be days of immunity from any exaction or annoyance. And extra days of immunity are given on the three days before a feast and the three days after, but there is no extension for sabbath or new moon.

In 2 Macc. 5.21-26 is described an incident in which Jews were slaughtered because they did not suspect there could be an attack on the sabbath. And ch. 6 describes how, after the replacement of the Jewish cult by worship of Zeus, the Jews were no longer permitted to keep either the sabbath or the traditional feasts, and some were burned to death for observing the sabbath secretly in caves.⁷

Chapter 8 includes a description of a Jewish victory and explains that pursuit of the fleeing enemy was discontinued because it was late on the day before the sabbath. Thereafter the victors 'kept the sabbath, giving great praise and thanks to the Lord' (8.27). After the sabbath they resumed distribution of the booty to the needy among them.

In 2 Macc. 12.38 keeping the sabbath is mentioned, with purification as a customary preparation, and in 15.3 the issue of fighting on the sabbath recurs. Nicanor orders his reluctant Jewish soldiers to fight, but he does not succeed in this aim.

⁶ See also full discussion on the issue of fighting on sabbath in Kubo, 'Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period', pp. 61-65.

⁷ Cf. a parallel text in Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.274-77.

In 1 Esdras 5:52, the restoration of the Jerusalem cult at the time of Ezra is retold, and the days for sacrifices are listed: on sabbaths and at new moons and at all the consecrated feasts. This sequence adds nothing to what we know already, and reflects lists in the Hebrew Bible already discussed above.⁸

DISCUSSION OF THE SABBATH IN THE APOCRYPHAL TEXTS

The change of perception of sabbath, from being a day like any other days, save that it was chosen and singled out as a day of rest, to being a holy time, a time with a different character from other time in the week, can be seen in the book of Judith where the sabbath, and the day before it, are days when the pious widow in the midst of her mourning rites is free of the obligation of fasting. By affecting what she could or could not do on Fridays as well as Saturdays, the sabbath has extended its numinous quality through *time*.⁹

To Moore, this text describes Judith's 'religious character and practice', and, therefore, what constitutes her religious practice takes place on these holy days; but he makes no comment as to what her religious practice on the days of sabbath and new moon might be.¹⁰ So, all that may be discovered from this text is that the sabbath can affect behaviour on another day as well, and we learn nothing more about the sabbath activities of Jews, pious or otherwise.

In the more impassioned writings of 1 and 2 Maccabees, which share a similar evaluation of the importance of the sabbath in the life

⁸ Although including 'sabbaths', which the list in Ezra 3 lacks.

⁹ But it must be borne in mind that new moon would have had a similar increase in sway by the same argument.

¹⁰ Moore, *Judith*, pp. 185, 181.

of their communities, there are multiple references to the sabbath in the discussion as to whether Jews should fight on the sabbath or not. This *more concentrated attention* indicates the extreme reverence with which the day of rest was regarded. The sabbath law had to be discussed by the community, and then put on one side in times of warfare, to allow those who wished to keep the sabbath, to survive and be able to keep it.¹¹

In recognition of the importance given to these discussions in the texts, Goldstein draws attention to the fact that 'Jason's efforts to show that Judas observed the Sabbath rigorously¹² are at least as massive as the efforts in 1 Maccabees to justify Mattathias' decision to permit warfare on the Sabbath (1 Macc. 2.39-41; cf. 9.43-49)'.¹³

Goldstein sees further signs of the importance of the sabbath in his understanding of 1 Macc. 9.34 as a 'misplaced gloss'.¹⁴ Although the text represents the sabbath as the day on which Bacchides learned of the appointment of Jonathan as leader in place of his brother Judas, Goldstein believes that the phrase 'on the sabbath' originally earned its place in the margin of the text because of the importance of the issue of violating the sabbath by fighting. So fighting on the sabbath was what was at issue, not whichever day Bacchides learned about Jonathan's appointment.¹⁵

Bartlett, discussing 1 Macc. 10.34, regards the three extra days of immunity given by Demetrius on either side of the main feast days as

¹¹ Cf. Josephus, *War* 2.456-57, 517, 634; *Antiquities* 12.274-77; 13.10-13, 252-53, 337; 14.63-64, 226-46.

¹² 2 Macc. 8.25-28, 12.38, 15.1-5; cf. 12.31-32.

¹³ Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, p. 87.

¹⁴ Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, pp. 378, 380-81, 385-86.

¹⁵ See also Bartlett, *Maccabees*, pp. 39, 121.

having been given to allow travel to and from each of the three pilgrim feasts.¹⁶ Goldstein confines his remarks to deciding which days are included in the terms 'festival' and 'appointed days', and, contrary to my expectation, makes no comment on the inclusion of the days sabbath and new moon in the list of days of immunity along with the other holy days.¹⁷

In 2 Macc. 6.1-11, we find the story of the suppression of Judaism, and the cameo picture of Jews assembling in caves to observe the sabbath secretly. Goldstein refers to these people eight times as 'Sabbath observers', and gives no synonyms for the phrase.¹⁸ Perhaps he feels that there are no alternatives that would not affect the meaning he wishes to ascribe to the words. This reader wonders what kind of sabbath observance would be done secretly in caves, but Goldstein makes no suggestion. The description could mean resting and doing nothing, or, it could imply carrying out some religious or social practices.

In his discussion of the account of thanksgiving on the sabbath for a victory won, in 2 Macc. 8, Goldstein concentrates heavily on the language of prayer used and its familiarity from the prayers in the Hebrew Bible, but gives no clue as to his interpretation of the worship carried out here, nowhere referring to the fact that it took place on sabbath, and regarding it as praise and thanksgiving following the victory, not the performance of a regular weekly ritual.¹⁹ This passage is the only one which does give evidence of worship of God, in

¹⁶ Bartlett, *Maccabees*, p. 137; see also Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.52.

¹⁷ Goldstein, *1 Maccabees*, pp. 408-409.

¹⁸ Goldstein, *2 Maccabees*, pp. 279-80.

¹⁹ Goldstein, *2 Maccabees*, pp. 336-37.

the form of praise and thanksgiving, on the sabbath. But, because there are no further details, and because it seems more likely from the way the section is introduced, that the praise and thanksgiving occurred because it was the day after a victory than because it was a sabbath, we can glean no definite indication that this text reflects regular sabbath worship.

Goldstein regards the description of purification for the sabbath in 2 Macc. 12.38 as a sign of Jason again stressing the strict sabbath observance of Judas.²⁰ He points out that there is no scriptural warrant for this pre-sabbath purification. The description of it in the text as a 'custom' shows that the community whose interests are preserved in this text were extending the laws of Torah to display more reverence for the holiness of sabbath, in a way that involved the members in a cleansing process. Such a process requires time, provision of water and facilities, and the group's belief in mental purification taking place alongside the physical. Members of the group believed that sabbath observance required this extra commitment.

The incident about Nicanor in 2 Macc. 15 is rightly seen by Bartlett to be heavily literary in composition, with its intention being 'clearly to show up Nicanor as a "bragging blasphemer"', it being clear that the agreement to fight on the sabbath, for the purposes of self-defence, had already been taken.²¹

In his comments on 1 Esdr. 5.52,²² Myers does not refer to the disparity between the list of holy days given here and in the biblical

²⁰ Goldstein, *2 Maccabees*, pp. 447-48.

²¹ Bartlett, *Maccabees*, pp. 336-37; see also Goldstein, *2 Maccabees*, pp. 495-96.

²² Myers, *I and II Esdras*, p. 70.

book of Ezra, namely the inclusion of 'sabbaths' in the list along with new moons and appointed feasts. This is disappointing from the point of view of this discussion, especially since at other junctures he is at pains to point out the closeness of the two textual traditions.²³

Perhaps this text is passed over because it contradicts his thesis that the two texts are essentially alike. But this difference between Ezra and 1 Esdras seems to me quite crucial, indicating a possible change in perspective as to how both new moon and sabbath were regarded by the two communities or within the two time zones. And this change goes some way towards confirming my thesis that the sabbath had a much more definite and important place in the religious consciousness of the later groups who produced these texts.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN THE APOCRYPHAL WORKS

The pictures of the sabbath that may be uncovered from the apocryphal works are varied, but the day can be fairly described as a day with some compelling quality that attracts the loyalty of certain groups of Jews.

In the books of the Maccabees, sabbath-keeping is a key distinguishing factor of the group of resistance fighters, a distinguishing factor they have to modify in order to survive. They agree, paradoxically, to by-pass the sabbath restriction for the present in order to keep the sabbath more faithfully in the future. However, in spite of the intensity of commitment to the sabbath, as for instance in their custom of purification before the sabbath, nowhere is sabbath

²³ Myers, *I and II Esdras*, pp. 69, 70.

worship (or prayer) described or even mentioned as an activity these fervent Jews undertook on a regular basis.

In the book of Judith the waiving of mourning rituals on the sabbath is extended to Friday as well, producing the double result of extending the benefits of the sabbath and also of bringing the sabbath to mind a full twenty-four hours before it began. But the sabbath is a day of freedom and rest for Judith; she carries out no special sabbath activities.

And in the heavily theological and pious discussions in the quite different world of the book of Tobit, the sabbath is never referred to at all, which is further evidence of how varied the attitudes to the sabbath were. For me, it is impossible to justify the belief—held by many scholars—that every one of those observant Jews undertook sabbath worship every week, but never mentioned it.

Thus it is plain to me at least, that to some Jews and to some Jewish writers the sabbath was important as an *ideal* that stirred the imagination and the blood. To other groups it was merely the day of rest, a day at variance with the other six only in the matter of what was *not* done on that special day. If a person is described in the texts as a faithful Jew, that does not apparently distinguish how they would regard the sabbath day. People with blatant devotion to the sabbath and people who never mention it are all part of the believing community of Judaism at that time.

TEXTS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The traditional image of the weekly sabbath as a day with worship rituals especial to itself can be given more substance by a

search among the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁴ In the Psalms Scroll²⁵ we find a descriptive summary of the non-extant list of the psalms and songs supposedly composed by David, namely three hundred and sixty-four daily psalms plus fifty-two for the sabbath.

...And he wrote 3600 psalms; and songs to sing before the altar over the whole-burnt *tamid* offering every day, for all the days of the year, 364; and for the *qorban* of the Sabbaths, 52 songs; and for the *qorban* of the New Moons and for all the Solemn Assemblies and for the Day of Atonement, 30 songs.

The arithmetic of that confirms both a weekly sabbath, and the practice of regularly singing an extra and particular psalm every seventh day, as well as the daily psalm. Compared with the one psalm set aside specifically for the sabbath in the Hebrew psalter, this represents quite a development in sabbath worship.

Then, in the liturgical fragments known as 'The Words of the Heavenly Lights' there is a unit called 'Hymns for the Sabbath Day' (*11Q Shir Shabb*).²⁶ There is also the text known as 'Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice', in which songs are designated to be used on a particular Sabbath, e.g. 'the seventh Sabbath on the sixteenth of the second month'.²⁷

A more direct form of evidence of the esteem in which sabbath was held by the Qumrân community can be found in the Damascus

²⁴ Sanders, *Psalms Scroll*, pp. 202, 210; Baumgarten, 'The Counting of the Sabbath', pp. 277-86.

²⁵ 11QPs^a 27.4-8.

²⁶ Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 202, 208, 210; Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4*, pp. 137, 150-51.

²⁷ Strugnell, 'Angelic Liturgy', p. 320; also Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, p. 211.

Document (cols. 11-12), where there are injunctions as to the purity and cleanliness of men offering sacrifice on the sabbath—including elaborate guidelines for proper behaviour on the sabbath (with 18 occurrences of the word sabbath), such as would preserve the believer from defiling the sabbath by so much as thoughts about the morrow's work, or by any actions that deal with commerce, travel or work of any sort.²⁸ Altogether there are twenty-eight prohibitions of specific actions which might be done on the sabbath, innocently and thoughtlessly, if they were not kept firmly in mind as infringing sabbath law, for example, the prohibition addressed to foster-fathers to prevent them carrying a child on sabbath. But there are no particular requirements with respect to either individual or communal prayer on the sabbath.

One of the stated sabbath requirements is the wearing of clean clothes, and after ten intervening sabbath regulations the point is made that no one unclean and in need of washing should enter the house of worship when a holy service of worship is taking place.²⁹ This rule is placed at the end of the section referring to sabbath and may well complete the section, but as it is also the transition to the next, and more general, section of the document it is not explicit that this does refer to the sabbath. If it does, then we have a correspondence with the purification custom described in 2 Macc. 12.38.

Earlier in the Damascus Document (3.14-15), God's gifts to Israel through the covenant are listed as 'His holy Sabbaths and His

²⁸ Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 112.

²⁹ Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 113.

glorious feasts, the testimonies of His righteousness and the ways of His truth'.³⁰ The sabbath is again seen as an entity, something given to people by God, not merely a portion of time distinguishable from other time only by its position in the week.

In the War Scroll (2.4), there is a list of holy days on which courses of sanctuary officiants are standing by, which reads, 'at their appointed times, on New Moons and on Sabbaths ...'³¹

A small fragment (no. 4) of a scroll from Cave 4 refers to the waving of the Omer and the view of the writer that it should not have the power to take precedence over sabbath rest, and another small fragment (no. 3) also refers to sabbath.³² Baillet lines up these fragments together to read:

4	3
... convocation [sainte ...]	balancer (la) gerbe
... le jour du sabbath <i>pour</i> ...	sans compter ... sabbats ...
... célébrer un mémorial <i>po[ur...]</i>	l'erreur d'aveuglement de ...
... qu'a m[ont]ré <i>un augure</i> ...	et non de la Loi de Moïse ...
... et ³³	

³⁰ Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 100.

³¹ Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 125; or 'on their festivals, on their new moons and the sabbaths...' (Yadin, *War Scroll*, pp. 202, 264).

³² Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4*, pp. 289-90, and Plate 72.

³³ I translate this as:

... [holy] convocation ...	waving the Omer ...
... on the sabbath day ...	apart from the sabbaths ...
... carrying out a remembrance f[or] ...	the error of the blindness of ...
... which showed a sign ...	and not from the law of Moses

Baumgarten reads fragment 3 on its own and this, though justifiable, is somewhat misleading, since he is in the process of referring to Baillet's work, and does not take issue with Baillet's placing of the two fragments side by side.

3

the waving of the Omer
apart from the Sabbaths
error of blindness
not from the Law of Moses.³⁴

DISCUSSION OF THE SABBATH IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The texts from the Dead Sea community indicate a progression of fifty-two weeks through the religious year punctuated by sabbaths which were held in considerable regard by members of the community. The weekly sabbath was observed in ways that included singing of special songs, perhaps as a replacement for the offering of sacrifices, as Talmon suggests.³⁵

It is also plain that those who framed the Damascus Covenant extended the strictness of the rules governing the sabbath beyond what is found the Hebrew Bible. The group had to take the sabbath very seriously indeed, and with so many curbs on their behaviour, the fact of the day's being the sabbath could not have been out of their consciousness for much time during the duration of the day.

Baumgarten expounds the text from Qumrân about waving of the Omer having no power to take precedence over sabbath rest as an

³⁴ Baumgarten, *Recent Discoveries*, p. 148.

³⁵ Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', p. 275.

indication that the Dead Sea community thought that ‘the ruling of the Pharisaic sages that the harvesting of the Omer overrides the Sabbath was an “error of blindness” and was “not in accordance with the Law of Moses”’.³⁶ If this interpretation is correct, this is evidence of a higher valuing of the inviolability of the sabbath by the Qumrân community, with them being ready to take umbrage at another group (perhaps influential Jews in Jerusalem) which gave sabbath less status than they did.³⁷

Referring to the list of holy days given in the War Scroll, appointed times, new moons and sabbaths,³⁸ Yadin, in a somewhat confused footnote,³⁹ comments that this follows the order in Ezek. 45.17,⁴⁰ as opposed to that in 1 Chr. 23.31; 2 Chr. 2.3; 8.13; 31.3; Neh. 10.34,⁴¹ that it agrees with *Jub.* 49.1 [*sic*],⁴² but not 2.9,⁴³ and that it agrees with 1QS 10.4-6⁴⁴ but is opposed to CD 3.14-15,⁴⁵ and 12.4.⁴⁶ He seems to be remarking either on the importance given to new moon in the War Scroll, or to the lesser importance of sabbath in that text, but he does not make it clear which of the two points it is that he is making.

³⁶ Baumgarten, *Recent Discoveries*, pp. 147-58, esp. pp. 148-50.

³⁷ Reading the two fragments together, as Baillet does, would not affect the essentials of this exegesis.

³⁸ *War Scroll* col. 2.4.

³⁹ Yadin, *War Scroll*, p. 264.

⁴⁰ Feasts, new moons, sabbaths, appointed feasts.

⁴¹ Sabbaths, new moons, appointed feasts.

⁴² Perhaps *Jub.* 23.19: festivals, months, sabbaths, jubilees.

⁴³ Sabbaths, months, feast days.

⁴⁴ Entry of the seasons on the days of new moon.

⁴⁵ His holy Sabbaths and His glorious feasts.

⁴⁶ The sabbaths and the feasts.

Also, we have the problem of wondering whether 'new moon' can be a fair translation of שֶׁנֶּחָדָה, in a community which follows a solar calendar and which could be expected to think of the 'new thing' as the beginning of the calendar month.⁴⁷

I suggest that, in order for the lists to have meaning, they must be recognized to be quotations from the Hebrew Bible. Then the conflict of meaning of שֶׁנֶּחָדָה between solar and lunar calendars would be irrelevant. The lists do not refer to the actual feasts celebrated by the community, and can tell us little about how they regarded the different days. If that be the case, then the changing positions of new moon and sabbath in the lists merely reflects similar changes to those observed in the Hebrew Bible, and tells us nothing further about the Qumrân community's views of the relative importance of sabbath and new moon.

It is fairer to draw conclusions about their view of sabbath from the texts that deal exclusively with sabbath, and to say that the Qumrân community did give sabbath great attention and accorded the *concept of the sabbath* power to dominate their lives and thoughts.

PRAYER AT QUMRAN

Yadin believes that the community at Qumrân, realising that they could not feel happy about participating in Temple sacrifices, had to 'content themselves with prayers and special ceremonies at home'.⁴⁸ He also finds that many of the prayers in the War Scroll recall biblical prayers before, during and after battles and are similar

⁴⁷ This query was raised by P.R. Davies in a private discussion.

⁴⁸ Yadin, *War Scroll*, p. 201.

in style to them. So it seems to me valid to make a connection between these prayers at Qumrân and the description of thanksgiving after the battle reported in 2 Macc. 10.38.⁴⁹

If we recall from Chapter 2 that Talmon regards the prayer offered by Israel as being primarily offered by priests in the holy silence in the Temple,⁵⁰ we can imagine that any inheritors of those traditions could well be expected to regard prayer in this light, and so the Qumrân community would feel that their role involved continuing that type of prayer in their community gatherings. There is evidence of daily prayers said in the morning and evening, and also of special prayers for festivals.⁵¹

One view takes these prayers as evidence of twice daily prayers by the Qumrân community,⁵² but the editor of the fragments is more cautious and recommends that the month indicated in the texts by the phases of the moon be regarded as an 'ideal' month, rather than any particular month.⁵³

But the details of sabbath worship and activities from the texts available so far indicate no requirement to say particular prayers as part of sabbath worship.

⁴⁹ Yadin links these two references, but makes no comment on them as parallels (*War Scroll*, p. 228); see also discussion above.

⁵⁰ Talmon, 'Institutionalized Prayer', p. 268.

⁵¹ Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4*, pp. 105-136, presents the reconstructed fragments of daily prayers (4Q503), and on pp. 175-214 of the prayers for feast days (4Q507-4Q509), suggesting New Year and the pilgrim feasts as likely occasions for these prayers.

⁵² Sanders, *Jewish Law*, p. 73.

⁵³ Baillet, *Qumrân Grotte 4*, p. 106.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

There is a definite increase in the reverence and attention accorded to the sabbath by the members of the Qumrân community over against that evident in the texts of the Hebrew Bible.

There are more rules restricting behaviour, and restricting it more severely, and there are particular songs for the different sabbaths through the year.

And from the evidence of the fragment about the waving of the Omer, we can surmise that the Qumrân community had a 'view' about the sabbath, which allowed them to pass judgment on others who did not share that view.

As far as lists of holy days are concerned, the Dead Sea texts seem to repeat the phrases of the Hebrew Bible, sometimes without realising that reverence for the new moon should be at odds with their adherence to the solar calendar. This makes the presence of new moon in the lists appear to be something of a formulaic relic carried along in the rhetorical naming of cultic practices from the Jerusalem Temple.

The members of the community sang special songs on the numbered sabbaths through the year, but there is no evidence of regular communal prayer as part of their sabbath worship.

TEXTS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN JUBILEES

In *Jub.* 1.14, sabbath occurs in a list of days special to Yahweh, 'new moons, sabbaths, festivals, jubilees and ordinances', in the observing of which the reader is warned to take special care, and in 23.19 the people are threatened with punishment because 'they have

forgotten the commandments and covenant and festivals and months and sabbaths and the jubilees and all of the judgments’.

In ch. 2 we are told that the sun has been created as a sign for days, sabbaths, months, feasts, years ..., ⁵⁴ and also that the ‘angels of the presence and all the angels of holiness (these two important kinds) ... keep the sabbath day with him [God] in heaven and on earth’. ⁵⁵

Later in ch. 2, there is a long section on the significance of the sabbath as sign, day of rest and day on which the people are to eat and drink and bless the Creator.

Chapter 50 is the closing chapter of *Jubilees*, and it is devoted to laws about the sabbath. It succeeds a long section dealing with Moses and Passover and its opening section makes immediate links between the sabbath and law.

In it the sabbath laws are much stricter than in the Hebrew Bible and affirm the death penalty for infringing the sabbath, for example, by work, profanation, marital relations, discussing business plans or travel, drawing water, lifting or carrying anything, ploughing, lighting a fire, riding or other travelling, slaughtering or snaring animals, fasting or waging war.

What are permitted, and stated to be the purposes to which the sabbath should be put are, for the ordinary people: eating, drinking, being satisfied, and resting from all occupations; and for the priests, although they are not mentioned by name: burning incense, blessing God and offering gifts and sacrifices in the sanctuary.

⁵⁴ *Jub.* 2.9, tr. O.S. Wintermute in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, p. 56.

⁵⁵ *Jub.* 2.18.

DISCUSSION ON THE SABBATH IN JUBILEES

In his study of the book of *Jubilees*, VanderKam feels that the writer wished 'his fellow Jews to observe carefully the divine laws about sacrifice, festivals, sabbath and the cultic calendar in order to avert the sort of punishments that God had meted out to their ancestors'.⁵⁶ He also believes that, in ch. 2, the writer of the book was purposefully drawing parallels between Israel and the sabbath in terms of what I would call 'an alternating induced harmony': the Lord had blessed and sanctified both Israel and the sabbath, therefore 'keeping sabbath is a means by which Israel's holiness is marked and through which it finds expression'.⁵⁷ If VanderKam is right, then there is quite a new understanding of the sabbath embedded in this text. Here the sabbath has power to influence the cosmic harmony on behalf of Israel, and possibly the proper keeping the sabbath on earth has influence over God himself, encouraging him to act on behalf of Israel. There is an alternating current of devotion to sabbath-keeping connecting Heaven and Israel in a perpetual, reciprocal linking.

Taking a less psychological view of the function of the sabbath in this text, Charlesworth regards this text⁵⁸ as an assertion that these particular groups of angels have kept the sabbath in this way since the first week of creation,⁵⁹ which clearly shows an extension of reverence for the sabbath to the cosmic domain as understood by the

⁵⁶ VanderKam, 'Jubilees', p. 113.

⁵⁷ VanderKam, 'Jubilees', p. 119.

⁵⁸ *Jub.* 2.16-18, 30.

⁵⁹ Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, pp. 38, 58.

writer of the text. But, as with all other texts studied so far, there is no suggestion that any of the duration of the sabbath should be spent in worship activities, in heaven or on earth.

And when in 50.12 war on sabbath is prohibited, this looks like a presentation of an opposite viewpoint to that expressed in Maccabees, or like a description of the situation at the beginning of the story of the Maccabees, but unaffected by the experiences and rethinking that they underwent and undertook.

But of more interest for this study are the two sections which state what should be done on the sabbath. In *Jub.* 2 the readers are told to eat, drink and bless the one who created all things, and in *Jub.* 50, they are told to eat, drink, be satisfied, rest and refrain from all work except for the priests' offering of incense, gifts and sacrifices in the sanctuary.

The readers are expressly told that on the sabbath day they should not fast; they are told to eat, drink and be satisfied. They are not told to do anything else.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SABBATH IN JUBILEES

In *Jubilees* there is an increase in the *thrall* of the sabbath as evidenced by the widening of application of the death penalty for breaking, defiling or polluting the sabbath, even by such acts as marital relations or planning the next day's journey. The sabbath was able to control more aspects of life than work only, and the sabbath seems to have become more important to the community that produced *Jubilees*, just as it had become more important to the Qumrân community.

Heaven observed the sabbath and on earth the Jews were supposed to follow suit. This was regarded as a privilege, but one which Gentiles were not expected to have.⁶⁰ The same atmosphere of religious fervour and holy elevation of the sabbath can be discerned in Jubilees as was discernible in the books of the Maccabees and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

But there is nonetheless no exhortation towards, or description of, sabbath worship for the ordinary population.

TEXTS ABOUT THE NEW MOON IN THE APOCRYPHAL WORKS

New moon occurs in the texts of Judith, 1 Maccabees and 1 and 2 Esdras, but out of the nine references in 1 Esdras, eight are dating references and only one refers to the new moon as a feast day in a list of holy days on which sacrifices are offered, such as occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible.⁶¹

In Jdt. 8.6 and 1 Macc. 10.34 we have already seen that sabbath and new moon are presented as holy days with similar attributes.

2 Esdras 1.31 parallels new moons and feast days,⁶² including no other days among the signs of loyalty to God that God is spurning along with 'circumcision of the flesh'.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NEW MOON IN THE APOCRYPHAL WORKS

Whenever sabbath and feast days are mentioned, then new moon is included along with sabbath and is, seemingly, of equal importance

⁶⁰ Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, p. 40.

⁶¹ See discussion on Ezra 3.5 in Chapter 2.

⁶² Myers, *I and II Esdras*, p. 142, footnotes a textual tradition which adds 'sabbaths'.

to it. But there are other sections of text which concern themselves only with the sabbath.

There are no discussions about fighting on other holy days, and the whole issue of obedience to rules about not working is raised and answered with reference to one day only, the sabbath. The new moon provokes neither disputes nor discussion.

TEXTS ABOUT THE NEW MOON IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In the Psalms Scroll, as noted above, we find the summary of the list of psalms and songs attributed to David.⁶³ There are thirty songs allocated to the new moons, solemn assemblies and the Day of Atonement. That number suggests that there could have been thirteen⁶⁴ different songs written for the new moons throughout the year.⁶⁵

In the War Scroll (2.4) is found the list 'at their appointed times, on New Moons and on Sabbaths...', times when the sanctuary officials were on duty.

In the non-canonical psalms from Qumrân, there is a partly reconstructed reference which reads '...[mon]th by month, sacred festival by sacred festival, day by day...'.⁶⁶

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NEW MOON IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Apart from the list suggesting that there were preserved somewhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls a full complement of psalms for

⁶³ 11QPs^a 27.4-8 already quoted above.

⁶⁴ Or twelve, depending on whether the solar calendar took precedence over the old established rhythms of worship.

⁶⁵ Sanders, *Psalms Scroll*, pp. 91-93.

⁶⁶ Schuller, *Non-Canonical Psalms*, p. 75.

the new moons, although without the exact number (whether twelve or thirteen) being specified, there seems to have been little interest expressed in that festival. Possibly this is a result of concentrating on a solar calendar, or of privileging the sabbath as the day to be observed above all others. The evidence is too sparse to permit a definite conclusion.

TEXTS ABOUT THE NEW MOON IN JUBILEES

The different renderings 'new moons' and 'months' in the two relevant verses of *Jubilees* in the translation of Charlesworth⁶⁷ show the difficulty of deciding which name 'an outspoken opponent of the lunar month' can give to the first day of the month or the new moon.⁶⁸ The lunar new moon, recorded by observation of the sky, would in time be superseded by the calendrical first of the month, worked out by calculation. The sighting of the new moon and any festivals associated with that would have to continue in an independent cycle through the year independent of the twelve month solar calendar or else become archaic relics from the past referred to in sacred texts but having no actuality in the life of the community.

DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NEW MOON IN JUBILEES

New moon appears not to be an issue in *Jubilees*, and to have entered the texts in quotations from, or allusions to, the Hebrew Bible, as a member of a word pair or word list, rather than as a holy topos in

⁶⁷ *Jub.* 1.14: new moons, sabbaths, festivals, jubilees, ordinances; *Jub.* 23.19: festivals and months and sabbaths and jubilees.

⁶⁸ Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, p. 39.

its own right. Nothing particular, or unusual, is said about new moon.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SABBATH AND NEW MOON IN INTERTESTAMENTAL LITERATURE

The sabbath shows signs of achieving prominence in the religious consciousness of the groups of Jews actively writing texts during this period. More interest in, and emphasis on, what is owed to the sabbath by Jews is expressed in many of the texts. This emphasis is expressed mainly through increased restrictions on activities and thoughts on the sabbath, the only positive injunction coming from Jubilees where the readers are instructed to 'be satisfied' on the sabbath.

The new moon still has some importance, although often it is imported as part of a word pair with sabbath or as part of a sequence with other holy days. It attracts no extra attention or reverence to itself in this period.

But in spite of all the later elaboration of the status of the sabbath, these texts are, like the Hebrew Bible, concerned only with sabbath rest, not worship, apart from the liturgical fragments from Qumrân (11Q Shir Shabb) which pointed to a sabbath on which communal worship took place, as evidenced by the fifty-two songs for the sabbath day (11QPs^a 27), and also in the more direct evidence of the dates given for certain songs as accompaniments to the sabbath sacrifice, listed in the Angelic Liturgy.

While noting with interest these increases in enthusiasm for the sabbath at Qumrân, we must, however, bear in mind that this

community was far removed from mainstream Judaism, both geographically and theologically. Thus any practices celebrated there may have been quite alien to the activities of city- or country-dwelling Jews. And whether the members of the Qumrân community could be classed as ordinary worshippers remains a moot point.

Clearly there was no longstanding stability in the views held about the sabbath, whether as powerful day of rest or as day of worship, and its influence was still growing and extending at the turn of the era. This increase in the thrall of the sabbath empowers us to look backwards in time to an era when the sabbath did not hold this enormous sway in the religious life of Israel, and during which the new moon celebrations played a central role in celebration and worship. Whether the new moon had priority over sabbath at any time or place in Israel's history cannot easily be uncovered, but it cannot be totally ruled out either.

What this survey has revealed, however, is that, for the ordinary Jew, there are no prescriptions for sabbath activities, or for private or public worship on the sabbath in any of these intertestamental texts. The sabbath is to be a day of rest and also of mental relaxation and enjoyment. Also, it has been shown that the sabbath was not a fixed unchanging institution, but increased in importance during the period reflected in the intertestamental literature.

4. SABBATH AS DAY OF REST AND STUDY OF THE LAW:

PHILO AND JOSEPHUS

BACKGROUND

The writings of Philo may be securely dated to the first part of the first century of the common era, since he was a member of the legation sent from Alexandria to Rome to treat with Gaius Caligula in 41 CE. As Philo lived in Alexandria, he was a Jew of the Diaspora, but because he wrote as an apologist, and since his writings have been preserved not in Jewish but in Christian collections, there is some hesitation in scholarly circles about regarding him as a typical Jew. Hengel regards as evident “‘syncretistic” tendencies’ in the work of Philo,¹ and Grant claims that Philo was the Jews’ ‘propagandist’, and that his ‘numerous literary works clothed Judaism in Greek dress’.² Nonetheless Philo was writing within a completely Jewish community, before the time of the existence of the Christian Church, and he was regarded by that Jewish community as a suitable envoy in their dealings with Rome.³

I prefer to regard Philo as a typical Jewish intellectual of his day, and to survey his writings to see what he relates, whether on purpose, or in the bygoing, about Jews and their activities on the sabbath. Whether or not the activities he describes should properly be classed as worship is a matter that will also be discussed.

¹ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, p. 114, also I, pp. 149, 165-66.

² Grant, *The Jews*, pp. 122, 126; see also pp. 127-28.

³ A thumbnail sketch of Philo’s social standing can be found in Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, p. 67.

Josephus's writings span the latter part of the first century CE, and are of various kinds: apologies, histories and autobiography.⁴ With his writings, as with all writings, we are limited to what he as author wishes to convey to us, but occasionally some material useful to the purpose of this study is embedded in, or described as background to, the matters Josephus is explaining.

In spite of the value of the extensive range of Josephus's writings, scholars have expressed doubts as to the veracity and reliability of what he relates. Thus Grant feels that his 'fascinating works ... show him up as self-congratulatory to the point of thoroughgoing mendacity'.⁵ But taking a more positive view, and although allowing that both Philo and Josephus exaggerate in their claims about the acceptability of Jewish practices in the Graeco-Roman world, Gager believes that they 'stand closer, far closer, to the truth than has commonly been assumed'.⁶

Taking these qualifications of Josephus as a reliable historian into account does not devalue him as an important source for the period in question, even though he expresses his view of the matters he discusses in ways that best serve his own purposes. What he wrote could well display bias, but it is nonetheless unlikely to have been unintelligible, or at odds with his readers' knowledge of the milieu in which they lived.

Since Philo belonged to the Diaspora he wrote of the Temple as an institution that was far away from his experience. He knew of προσευχαί as centres where local Jews congregated to arrange the everyday business of living as Jews in an alien culture. Josephus, for different reasons, also writes as if divorced from the Temple. He knew

⁴ Juster, *Les Juifs*, I, p. 12.

⁵ Grant, *The Jews*, p. 188.

⁶ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 85-85.

of a *former* Temple and of present-day προσευχαί and συναγωγαί where communities of Jews gathered.

So, because much of the discussion of what Philo and Josephus have to tell us is clouded by the unresolved question of the possible meanings of the word ‘synagogue’ in Palestine and the Diaspora during their lifetimes, it is relevant to recall that there are no references whatsoever to synagogues, whether as groups or as buildings, or to sabbath worship in any of the apocryphal works of the Bible, not even in those books which speak of pious, observant Jews and their religious practices.⁷

Rivkin regards the lack of references to ‘the synagogue’ in Ben Sira as especially noteworthy,⁸ given the widely prevailing scholarly belief in the early establishment of the synagogue as both institution and building.⁹ He goes so far as to regard the claim for the existence of the synagogue in the period of Ben Sira as a ‘notorious’ assumption, since although no pre-Hasmonaean sources mention the synagogue, ‘scholars give *priority* to silence’, and take ‘for granted that Ben Sira lived in a society where there were synagogues—synagogues that had been in existence for several hundred years’.¹⁰

⁷ In the literature there is a tendency to equate sabbath observance with sabbath worship, the latter supposedly taking place in ‘services’ in ‘synagogue’ buildings. I aim to show there can be no such easy equation of these disparate institutions.

⁸ Rivkin, ‘Ben Sira’, esp. pp. 344-48.

⁹ Clements, *God and Temple*, p. 130; Simon, ‘Judaism’, pp. 392-92; Snaith, ‘Worship’, pp. 544-45; Turro, ‘Synagogue’, pp. 879-80; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, p. 79; II, p. 54 (n. 165); Sandmel, *The First Christian Century*, p. 72, notes, p. 102. However, Sonne, ‘Synagogue’, pp. 478-80, and Posner, ‘Synagogue’, pp. 579-95, express the prevailing view but give contrary views also, and Saldarini, ‘Synagogue’, makes the ambiguity of the extant evidence regarding synagogues abundantly plain.

¹⁰ Rivkin, ‘Ben Sira’, pp. 345-46.

Rivkin rightly feels that the argument from silence has been overplayed. The silence of the sources cannot mean that synagogues definitely did not exist, but neither can silence be used to prove that they did. With some justice, he insists that a claim for the existence of some institution in society must have some positive evidence, and that, when faced with a lack of such evidence, scholars may only postulate the institution's existence and be ready to revise their hypotheses should new evidence be found.

I agree with much of what Rivkin says and believe that evidence which points to the existence of synagogues, either as groups or as buildings, is only available in later writings, some of which are examined in this and the following chapters of this study.

PHILO: SABBATH PRACTICE

A search through Philo's literary corpus to find details of sabbath worship yields little in the way of evidence.

Philo regards sabbath rest as of the highest importance and makes what seems to the twentieth-century mind a somewhat illogical extension of sabbath rest to plants (since they could only be involved in a passive sense or at the most complicitly!), by recommending that his readers spare even the plant kingdom from involvement with work on the sabbath by refraining from plucking fruit from the resting trees.¹¹ The whole of living creation is to make obeisance to the power of the sabbath, not merely animals with wills and instincts, but also plants which merely burgeon and ripen.

¹¹ Philo, *Moses* 2.21-22; this point is made by Kubo, 'Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period', p. 61.

He regards sabbath as a festival, like the other festivals and feasts,¹² belonging to God, and expatiates on the ways in which humankind can undermine religious celebrations if they are so minded.¹³ He declares that the sabbath has been given the name of rest because of all the numbers seven is the most peaceful.¹⁴ But he says nothing specific about the way the sabbath should be honoured or about worship activities for the sabbath.

He several times refers to gatherings of Jews on the sabbath, but he refers to the gatherings by different names. Thus when he speaks of the efforts of a member of the ruling class in Egypt trying to 'disturb our ancestral customs and especially to do away with the law of the Seventh Day which we regard with the utmost reverence and awe', he refers to the Jews as meeting as 'conventicles' or συναγώγια.¹⁵

Speaking generally about 'cities' he gives two descriptions of sabbath gatherings of Jews. In one he refers to the longstanding practice of the Jews in that they 'every seventh day occupy themselves with the philosophy of their fathers' in their 'places of prayer (προσευκτήρια) throughout the cities'. These he describes as being similar to the philosophical schools of the Greeks, in providing 'edification and betterment in moral principle and conduct' and as being 'schools of prudence and courage and temperance and justice and also of piety, holiness and every virtue by which duties to God and men are discerned and rightly performed'.¹⁶ Philo is painting a picture

¹² Philo, *Special Laws* 2.41.

¹³ Philo, *Cherubim* 90-101.

¹⁴ Philo, *Abraham* 28.

¹⁵ Philo, *Dreams* 123-28; see further discussion of this passage below.

¹⁶ Philo, *Moses* 215-16.

of educational gatherings where religious, social and moral topics are discussed.

In the second description, he speaks of the mandatory abstention from work and the contrary 'exercise of the higher activities ... For the law bids us take the time for studying philosophy ... So each seventh day there stand wide open in every city thousands of schools of good sense, temperance, courage and justice and the other virtues in which scholars sit in order quietly with ears alert and full attention, so much do they thirst for the draught which the teacher's words supply'.¹⁷ This picture is very similar to the one painted already, and again depicts a teacher–student ambience at the sabbath meetings of Jews. But here neither the place where they met nor the gathering is given any specific title.

Although Philo rarely gives a name to the sabbath gatherings of Jews, he frequently names the building where Jews meet as a *προσευχή* usually translated either as prayer-house or as meeting-house. The word has the basic meaning of 'prayer' and is therefore by metonymy able to mean 'prayer-house' in Jewish contexts.¹⁸

This term appears six times in his account of the anti-Jewish behaviour of an Alexandrian official called Flaccus, who indicated to the mob in the city, by not taking measures against their hostility to the Jews, that he was in some sense sanctioning it. He did this in order to gain the favour of the mob because he was, according to Philo, 'crazy

¹⁷ Philo, *Special Laws* 2.60-62.

¹⁸ *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1151; *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 720; *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p. 1169; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, II, p. 808; also 3 Macc. 7.20 refers to the setting up by the Jews of an inscribed pillar and dedicating a *προσευχή* at a place of celebration. Hadas (3 & 4 *Maccabees*, pp. 84-85) believes that some actual site is being referred to, so he translates *προσευχή* as 'house of prayer'.

for fame' and so the crowd 'called out with one accord for installing images in the meeting-houses' (προσευχαί).¹⁹ The crowd made out that placing statues of the emperor in the Jewish meeting-houses was one of *their* ways of showing their loyalty to the Roman Emperor and that it sprang from a good-hearted intention to show support for the Roman government. Flaccus concurred with this plan in spite of the fact that it was illegal and that the one million Jews in Egypt would be sure to raise a stir.²⁰

Philo regards the spreading of the report of what he calls 'the overthrowing of the meeting-houses'²¹ as a very hostile act also, since he believed that the idea that such behaviour was possible might spread to other cities and regions of the empire, to 'the most prosperous countries of Europe and Asia both in the islands and on the mainland, and ... the Holy City', and felt that 'it was to be feared that people everywhere might take their cue from Alexandria, and outrage their Jewish fellow-citizens by rioting against their [meeting-houses]²² and ancestral customs'. It is worth remarking that Philo believes the same types of meeting-houses of Jews, open to the same types of abuse, existed in all these different locations, including Jerusalem.

He goes on to indicate how serious a loss would have been occasioned to the Jews by the invalidating of their buildings for use by having images installed in them. He says that Jews 'by losing their meeting-houses'²³ were losing also what they would have valued as

¹⁹ Philo, *Flaccus* 40-55.

²⁰ Philo gives this number for the Jewish population of Egypt.

²¹ Colson (LCL) translates προσευχή as synagogue.

²² Colson (LCL) translates προσευχή as synagogue.

²³ Colson (LCL) translates προσευχή here as 'meeting-house', in the same section where the two previous occurrences of the word were translated as 'synagogue'.

worth dying many thousand deaths, namely, their means of showing reverence to their benefactors, since they no longer had the sacred buildings where they could set forth their thankfulness'.²⁴

It is clever of Philo to use the same arguments to stop the installation of images as the crowd used to have them installed, namely the importance to loyal subjects of having ways of showing their reverence for their emperor. But of course on each side there are hidden agenda: on the Alexandrian crowd's part a hostility to the other race inhabiting their city, and on Philo's part an attempt at manoeuvring the Roman authorities into banning the introduction of Roman images. Philo had to tune his arguments finely to get leverage on this Roman dichotomy for, as Goldenberg says, 'Roman law recognized and protected Jewish Sabbath-observance, just as Roman thinking deplored it'.²⁵

Philo completes his case by showing how fundamental the προσευχαί are to the Jews in their expressions of loyalty to the state by depicting the Jews as saying to Flaccus and the crowd: 'You have failed to see that you are not adding to but taking from the honour given to our masters, and you do not understand that everywhere in the habitable world the religious veneration of the Jews for the Augustan house has its basis as all may see in the meeting-houses; and if we have these destroyed no place, no method is left to us for paying this homage'.²⁶

To Philo, in this argument at least, the προσευχαί are the places where the Jews give publicly visible religious homage to the Roman imperial family, which places would be invalidated for such use by

²⁴ Philo, *Flaccus* 48.

²⁵ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 412.

²⁶ Philo, *Flaccus* 49.

Jews by the introduction of Roman statues.²⁷ He also refers to this process of installing images as 'seizing the meeting-houses'.²⁸ And the reason that this counts as destruction is that the Jews would no longer be able to enter those buildings and carry out the actions in them that they were accustomed to carry out.

Later in his writings about Flaccus, Philo describes the worship offered to God by the thankful Jews once they hear that Flaccus has been arrested.²⁹ This is not worship offered on a particular day of the week, but in response to a belief that God had rescued them from their enemies. He says that they:

advanced from their houses ... [and] ... with hands outstretched to heaven they sang hymns and led songs of triumph to God who watches over human affairs. 'We do not rejoice, O Lord,' they said, 'at the punishment meted out to our enemy, for we have been taught by the holy laws to have human sympathy. But we justly give thanks to Thee because Thou hast taken pity and compassion on us and relieved our unbroken and ceaseless afflictions.' All night long they continued to sing hymns and songs of praise and at dawn, pouring out through the gates, they made their way to the parts of the beach near at hand, since their meeting-houses had been taken from them, and standing in the open space cried aloud with one accord 'Most Mighty King of mortals and immortals, we have come here to call on earth and sea, and

²⁷ In this understanding of the importance of showing loyalty to Rome in a physical or material way Philo parallels the thinking of Tacitus, *Histories* 5.4, who comments on the fact that the Jews do not set up statues in their cities nor in their 'temples', and neither do they flatter or honour their own kings nor the Caesars in this way; see the discussion in Chapter 5 and also the Appendix of Texts for Chapter 5.

²⁸ Philo, *Flaccus* 53.

²⁹ Philo, *Flaccus* 120-23.

air and heaven, into which the universe is partitioned, and on the whole world, to give Thee thanks...'³⁰

The words of their hymns as reported by Philo make forceful contributions to the arguments he was offering to Caligula and probably should not be taken as the Jews' actual or usual hymns although the language of praise and thanks to God is typical of similar thanksgiving hymns in the Psalms and in 2 Maccabees.³¹

The worship is offered in response to a rescue. It consists of the ritual actions of prayer and the singing of hymns and triumph songs. The people perform it both as they walk through the streets and later on the beach because 'their meeting-houses had been taken from them'. These actions do correspond to my description of worship, but here, as in 2 Macc. 8, they happen as a response to a perceived intervention of God on behalf of the Jews. I have found no accounts of this type of worship taking place in a meeting-house of the Jews on any sabbath described anywhere in the writings of Philo.

Elsewhere, in a more detailed and vivid account of the hostile behaviour of the Alexandrians towards the Jews,³² Philo states that the mob

collected great bodies of men to attack the meeting-houses, of which there are many in each section of the city. Some they ravaged, others they demolished with the foundations as well, others they set fire to and burnt regardless in their frenzy and insane fury of the fate of the neighbouring houses, for nothing

³⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.256-58 refers to the building of προσευχαί 'near the sea, in accordance with their native custom', but it is not clear how generally prevalent this practice was.

³¹ 2 Macc. 8.27, 29.

³² Philo, *Embassy* 132-139.

runs faster than fire when it gets hold of something to feed it. I say nothing of the tributes to the emperors which were pulled down or burnt at the same time, the shields and gilded crowns and the slabs and inscriptions, consideration for which should have made them spare the rest ... The meeting-houses which they could not raze or burn out of existence, because so many Jews lived massed together in the neighbourhood, they outraged in another way, thereby overthrowing our laws and customs. For they set up images of Gaius in them all and in the largest and most notable a bronze statue of a man mounted on a chariot and four.

We may conclude from this passage: that there were many meeting-houses in Alexandria, for Philo says that there were many in each of the quarters of the city. They were sometimes independent buildings, but often abutted domestic dwellings, and at least one was large enough to accommodate a sculpture of a man driving a chariot with four horses. Inside the meeting-houses there were tributes to the emperor: shields, gilded crowns, slabs and inscriptions, which in some way related to the Jews acknowledging publicly the esteem in which they held the Roman imperial family. Also of interest is the fact that none of *these* items caused offence to the Jews, profaned their meeting-houses or rendered them in any way unacceptable to Jews. We can also imagine some arguments and scuffles taking place outside and inside the prayer-houses as the statues were taken in and set in their places.

Philo continues his argument by speaking of the time of Gaius's predecessor, Tiberius, when there was no violence or illegality practised against the meeting-houses in Alexandria,³³ and there had been no efforts made to introduce a statue, bust or painting of the

³³ Philo, *Embassy* 152.

emperor into the meeting-houses.³⁴ It appears, therefore, that the inclusion of any of these three types of object would also have made the meeting-house unusable, although inclusion of shields, gilded crowns, slabs and inscriptions did not.

For the next section of his argument Philo moves on to discuss how the Jewish community in Rome fared during the rule of Tiberius,³⁵ during which time there was in that city also no occurrence of violence or illegality against the Jews. He writes approvingly of Tiberius.

He was aware that the great section of Rome on the other side of the Tiber is occupied and inhabited by Jews, most of whom were Roman citizens emancipated. For having been brought as captives to Italy they were liberated by their owners and were not forced to violate any of their native institutions. He knew therefore that they have houses of prayer³⁶ and meet together in them, particularly on the sacred sabbaths when they receive as a body a training in their ancestral philosophy. He knew too that they collect money for sacred purposes from their first fruits and send them to Jerusalem by persons who would offer the sacrifices. Yet nevertheless he neither ejected them from Rome nor deprived them of their Roman citizenship because they were careful to preserve their Jewish citizenship also, nor took any violent measures against the houses of prayer, nor prevented them from meeting to receive instructions in the laws, nor opposed their offerings of the

³⁴ Philo, *Embassy* 141-54.

³⁵ Philo, *Embassy* 155-58.

³⁶ In this section dealing with Rome, although immediately following the section about Alexandria where προσευχή was consistently translated as 'meeting-house', Colson (LCL) translates προσευχή consistently as 'house of prayer', but reverts to 'meeting-house' when the narrative again refers to Alexandria. The rationale behind this alteration escapes me as Philo has no interruption at all in his flow of thought throughout the complete section. But readers of the English text might well imagine that two different words or institutions are indicated by the change of term.

first fruits. Indeed so religiously did he respect our interests that supported by wellnigh his whole household he adorned our temple through the costliness of his dedications, and ordered that for all time continuous sacrifices of whole burnt offerings should be carried out every day at his own expense as a tribute to the most high God.

Philo then rounds off his argument by praising Tiberius for the freedoms he allowed to the Jews in the exercise of their faith, and also the accommodations he made to Jewish religious scruples, such as avoiding doling out free corn to the populace on the sabbath, when Jews would be unable to benefit.³⁷

In this part of *The Embassy to Gaius*, from lines 132 to 165, concerning the meeting-houses in Alexandria and Rome, the word προσευχή appears nine times,³⁸ and in each case represents a building in which Jews met on the sabbath to learn their laws and ‘ancestral philosophy’ from those of their number who could act as teachers. And these premises were also used as places where homage was paid to the Roman imperial house and the walls of these buildings were adorned with inscriptions and carved designs which expressed this honouring permanently. But the buildings could lose their status as προσευχαί through profanation by forbidden items such as statues, busts or paintings of the Emperor.

³⁷ Philo, *Embassy* 156-58.

³⁸ And elsewhere, the word crops up three more times in re-iteration of the same arguments, at *Embassy* 191, 346, 371, the second of these instances being translated ‘synagogue’ in the Loeb edition. I am unable to detect any reason for the introduction of the word ‘synagogue’ in the translation (of Colson) at this point.

Later in his submission to Gaius Caligula³⁹ Philo harks back to the time of Augustus, who instructed his Asian governors that

the Jews alone should be permitted by them to assemble in συναγώγια. These gatherings, he said, were not based on drunkenness and carousing to promote conspiracy, but were schools of temperance and justice where men while practising virtue subscribed the annual first-fruits to pay for the sacrifices which they offer and commissioned sacred envoys to take them to the temple in Jerusalem.⁴⁰

Perhaps Philo gilds the Emperor's words a little in this eulogy about the Jews as ideal citizens, but what he says must, in the main, reflect Jewish practice at the time.

In his more overtly apologetic writing, Philo describes how the sabbath of the Jews is spent valuably and not in idleness.⁴¹ Helping his readers to form a clearer picture of what happened at the sabbath assemblies, Philo says that those present sat 'together in a respectful and orderly manner' and heard 'the laws read so that none should be in ignorance of them'. They sat in silence except for adding something to signify approval of what was read.⁴² A priest or elder who was present read and expounded the holy laws to them. The males thus informed were considered to be able to pass on their understanding to

³⁹ Philo, *Embassy* 311-13; also three more times at lines 191, 346 and 371, making a total of eleven uses of the word προσευχή to describe the buildings where the Jews met.

⁴⁰ The Loeb edition here translates συναγώγια as 'synagogues', whereas in *Dreams* 127, the same word is rendered 'conventicles'. The use of the word 'gatherings' in the next sentence, where the Greek noun does not appear, suggests that that is the meaning which should be understood in this passage.

⁴¹ Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.9-13.

⁴² Possibly interpolating 'Amen'.

their wives, children and slaves, which implies that those groups of people were not present at these sabbath sessions.

Thus it appears that, in Alexandria at the time of Philo, the sabbath had become a day of gathering for study and contemplation as well as a day of rest. But the parallel development as a day of worship was not necessarily a part of this process of change. The Jewish men⁴³ came to a building called a προσευχή (or once, προσευκτήριον) where they could sit, to receive and exchange instruction, offer homage to their Roman rulers in ways unspecified by Philo, but possibly merely by including the honorific material in the stonework of the building. However, there are no indications that they held a regular sabbath service of worship to God.

Activities that match my definition of worship, can be discovered in Philo's description of the *daily* religious life of the Therapeutae, who, as well as reading the holy scriptures and interpreting them as allegories, also composed sacred songs to God.

Twice every day they pray, at dawn and at eventide ... The interval between early morning and evening is spent entirely in spiritual exercise. They read the Holy Scriptures and seek wisdom from their ancestral philosophy by taking it as allegory ...but [they] also compose hymns and psalms to God in all sorts of metres and melodies which they write down ...⁴⁴

But their sabbath meetings are described in terms indistinguishable from those of Jews in the προσευχή. They are not described as carrying out these worship activities on the sabbath.

⁴³ The texts do not make clear that females attended.

⁴⁴ Philo, *Contemplative Life* 27-29.

Philo describes how the Therapeutae assemble together on the seventh day, how they

sit in order according to their age in the proper attitude, with their hands inside the robe, the right hand between the breast and chin and the left withdrawn along the flank. Then the senior among them who also has the fullest knowledge of the doctrines which they profess comes forward and with visage and voice alike quiet and composed gives a well reasoned and wise discourse ... [which] ... passes through the hearing and into the soul and there stays securely ... all the others sit still and listen showing their approval merely by their looks and nods.⁴⁵

This is close to what has been described before as normal practice in the προσευχαί, apart from the description of the sitting posture of the Therapeutae, and it includes none of the worship practices that are described as daily behaviour of the Therapeutae.

However, their sanctuary, which he does not refer to by any name, reads like typical descriptions of 'synagogues', for he describes it as

a double enclosure, one portion set apart for the use of the men, the other for the women. For women too regularly make part of the audience with the same ardour and the same sense of their calling. The wall between the two chambers rises up from the ground to three or four cubits built in the form of a breast work, while the space above the roof is left open. This arrangement serves two purposes; the modesty becoming to the female sex is preserved, while the women sitting within earshot can easily follow what is said since there is nothing to obstruct the voice of the speaker.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Philo, *Contemplative Life* 30-31.

⁴⁶ Philo, *Contemplative Life* 32-33.

This is rather like the popular image of the synagogue building of the Jews at the beginning of the Christian era, but here in Philo it is attributed solely to the Therapeutae, and unfortunately he gives neither the building, nor the gathering held there, a name.⁴⁷

Similar to Philo's description of the sabbath of the Therapeutae, is his account of the Essenes,⁴⁸ who, on the sabbath

abstain from all other work and proceed to sacred spots which they call synagogues [οἱ καλοῦνται συναγωγαί]. There, arranged in rows according to their ages, the younger below the elder, they sit decorously as befits the occasion with attentive ears. Then one takes the books and reads aloud and another of especial proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood. For the most part their philosophical study takes the form of allegory ...

This description of what the Essenes do is not unlike the practice of the Therapeutae, but the Essenes go to holy places called synagogues. From the way Philo introduces the word it is evident that the word 'synagogue' is not Philo's word; rather, he describes *their institution* by the name *they* give it—synagogue. And this is the only occasion that Philo uses the word 'synagogue' to mean either an assembly of Jews or a building in which they met, and even here, the context leaves ambiguous whether a building is indicated or not, for the sitting in rows could happen in the open air and it is only the taking of the books for reading aloud that suggests a permanent structure of some sort.

⁴⁷ It is also noteworthy that women are in some sense present and also participating at this meeting.

⁴⁸ Philo, *Every Good Man is Free* 81-83.

And here I agree with Hoenig who says, Philo is 'describing the study of the Law by the Essenes, but not prayer-worship'.⁴⁹

Earlier, attention was drawn to Philo's use of the term συναγωγή (gatherings) for the meetings of the Jews. One usage occurs in his account of the permission, given by Augustus, for Jews to come together in *gatherings*, which were 'schools of temperance and justice', and which opened their doors to outsiders. This matches closely his description of Jews in προσευχαί in Alexandria, and does not seem to refer to a different sort of gathering or activity.

In the other account of these 'gatherings' he describes a member of the ruling class in Egypt railing at the Jews in the hope of persuading them that they had no good reason to persist in sabbath rest. The man supposes, for the purposes of his argument, a sudden attack on the gathered community, presumably on the sabbath, by enemies, flood, fire or other natural disaster and supposedly asks the Jews

...will you stay at home perfectly quiet? Or will appear you in public in your usual guise, with your right hand tucked inside and the left hand held close to the flank under the cloak lest you should even unconsciously do anything that might help to save you? And will you sit in your conventicles and assemble your regular company and read in security your holy books, expounding any obscure point and in leisurely comfort discussing at length your ancestral philosophy? No, you will throw all these off and gird yourselves up for the assistance of yourselves, your parents and your children, and the other persons who are nearest and dearest to you, and indeed also your chattels and wealth to save them too from annihilation.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Hoenig, 'City-Square', p. 452, n. 26.

⁵⁰ Philo, *Dreams* 123-28.

The picture of sabbath activities portrayed in this text is a quiet and leisured reading of holy books followed by discussion, which mirrors exactly Philo's other accounts. The Jews' sabbath inaction is contrasted with the vigorous movements and actions that would be taken by 'other, sensible' men in the face of disaster. And it appears to be the males of the community who are being addressed in this rhetorical way about the likelihood of them doing anything useful if they keep their hands tucked inside their clothes.

It must be said that this description of the disposition of the Jews' hands and arms in their clothes is uncannily like the description given elsewhere by Philo of the posture of the seated Therapeutae at their sabbath gathering, but here it appears to refer to the generality of Jews.

The texts cited above show that the name for the gatherings of Jews on the sabbath and/or the name for the building in which they gathered were not applied unequivocally when Philo was writing. For he used three different names for the sabbath assembly (προσευκτήριον, συναγωγή, συναγώγιον) and only used προσευχή when intending a building; for where a building is definitely indicated, for example, if it were burned down by an angry mob or had a statue put inside, it is always called a προσευχή. And the only worship that Philo describes for ordinary Jews takes place out of doors and in response to a saving act of God towards the people, namely the arrest of Flaccus.

Philo describes Jews assembling on the sabbath, not to worship, but to read, study and discuss Torah. But ^{although} his various descriptions of the sabbath gatherings are all very similar, there is no uniformity in the name he uses for the sabbath gathering.

NEW MOON IN THE WRITINGS OF PHILO

In trying to complete our understanding of the importance of new moon in Jewish religious life, it is worth checking what Philo has to say about it. He makes it plain that the new moon was still a very important holy day for Jews, although it had a rather ambiguous status. He re-iterates the sacrifices due at new moon from the Numbers cultic calendar.⁵¹ Then, as if denying the status of the new moon festival, he makes a clear and pejorative contrast between the celebration of the day of the new moon by 'some states', and the 'sacred seventh day' of the Jewish nation.⁵² Yet, elsewhere in his works he devotes a large section of apologetic material (c. 400 words) to the propriety of celebrating the day of the new moon, giving as reasons, because it 'is the beginning of the month, and the beginning, both in number and in time, deserves honour', and 'because when it arrives, nothing in heaven is left without light', also because 'the moon traverses the zodiac in a shorter fixed period than any other heavenly body'.⁵³ However strange Philo's justifications might seem to us, they make it plain that at his time new moon had still some importance—although secondary to the sabbath, and that he was, in some sense, driven into an apologetic position vis-à-vis the new moon.

⁵¹ Philo, *Special Laws* 2.140-44.

⁵² Philo, *Decalogue* 96.

⁵³ Philo, *The Special Laws* 2.140-44.

JOSEPHUS: SABBATH PRACTICE

A very similar picture of sabbath activities can be culled from the writings of Josephus. He makes several references to Jewish abstention from work or activity on the sabbath.

Josephus's writings about the sabbath, in the main, explain the biblical sabbath to his readers,⁵⁴ or describe sabbath gatherings in which political discussions took place,⁵⁵ or on which the Law was studied.⁵⁶ The sabbath has no noticeable religious cachet or special quality of holiness in his writings.

Speaking generally of Moses' instructions to Jews on religious matters, Josephus reports that he ordained 'that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it ...'⁵⁷ And elsewhere Josephus describes the Jews as giving 'every seventh day over to the study of our customs and our law, for we think it necessary to occupy ourselves, as with any other study, so with these through which we can avoid committing sins'.⁵⁸ There is no indication here that the study is in any way a worship activity; rather it is an acceptable occupation of the mind which does not infringe sabbath law.

He reports the sometime refusal of Jews to fight on the sabbath, saying that it is 'a day on which from religious scruples Jews abstain from even the most innocent acts'.⁵⁹ And in his description of the Essenes he reports that they 'are stricter than all Jews in abstaining

⁵⁴ Josephus, *Apion* 2.175-83; *War* 2.147; *Antiquities* 3.237-38.

⁵⁵ Josephus, *Life* 271-89.

⁵⁶ Josephus, *War* 2.289-92

⁵⁷ Josephus, *Apion* 2.175.

⁵⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.42-44.

⁵⁹ Josephus, *War* 2.456; see also *War* 2.517, 634; *War* 7.52; *Antiquities* 13.252-53; 14.63-64, 226-46 for other references to sabbath rest.

from work on the seventh day', thus making plain his understanding of the sabbath inaction of ordinary Jews.⁶⁰

Josephus frequently draws attention to the legal protection given to Jews wishing to exercise their religion in the cities of the empire,⁶¹ and the religion so defined includes coming together for sacred and holy rites, making offerings for sacrifices, deciding their affairs and controversies, and observing the sabbath.

In a sustained piece of first-person narration, Josephus describes a series of events which took place in the large prayer-house (προσευχή) in Tiberias. The action lasts from the morning of the sabbath till the following Monday morning and describes an exciting series of confrontations.⁶² This is the longest piece of writing available that describes Jews assembling in a communal building, and so it merits close scrutiny.

He writes that on the sabbath 'there was a general assembly in the Prayer-house, a huge building, capable of accommodating a large crowd'. A heated political discussion took place, at which Josephus was not present, about whether the Jews were better off under Josephus as general or taking orders from four of their own number and he says that 'a riot would inevitably have ensued, had not the arrival of the sixth hour, at which it is our custom on the Sabbath to take our midday meal, broken off the meeting'. At noon on the sabbath the discussions ceased, although unfinished, for the time-honoured lunch-time meal.

⁶⁰ Josephus, *War* 2.147; this sabbath inaction was also referred to somewhat inimically by Agatharcides, as preserved by Josephus, *Apion* 1.208-12.

⁶¹ Josephus, *Apion* 2.72; *Antiquities* 14.232-49, 260-64; 16.27-28, 42-44, 168; 19.304, 306.

⁶² Josephus, *Life* 272-303.

There is no reference in the passage to any other purpose in the Jews' being together than discussing community business.

Arriving at 7 am the next morning, Sunday, presumably when he expected the discussion to resume, Josephus 'found the people already assembling in the Prayer-house, although they had no idea why they were being convened'. But he could not remain to listen to the discussions as he was decoyed away by the local leaders having arranged the delivery of a spurious message of danger on the frontier.

Josephus returned to the prayer-house to defend himself against the verbal attacks of his opponents, which he expected to have been delivered during his absence, and says that he 'found the whole of the council (βουλή) and populace in conclave, and Jonathan and his associates making a violent tirade against me, as one who lived in luxury and neglected to alleviate their share of the burden of the war'. The Jewish leaders produced more letters allegedly from persons requesting assistance on the Galilee frontier. The Tiberian citizens, believing the letters, became angry with Josephus, who countered by acting as if he also believed in the letters and outlined plans of campaign which would involve Jonathan and his friends in immediate action. This caused a check to their enthusiasm for a swift response to the bogus letters.

But one of their group suggested that on the next day—Monday—a public fast should be called and that 'they should reassemble at the same place and hour, without arms, in order to attest before God their conviction that without his aid no armour could avail them'. This comment indicates to the modern reader that the προσευχή was regarded as a place in which it was suitable to state allegiance to God

and make vows, yet also a place which one might attend wearing weapons; but to Josephus it implied that his enemies wished to have him and his friends in a 'defenceless condition'.

So to avoid falling into any trap that might be in preparation, Josephus put on sword and breastplate 'as little conspicuous as possible' and went to the prayer-house with two of the most reliable of his bodyguards bearing hidden daggers.

Only these two of Josephus's party were allowed to enter with him. He says that the assembly was 'proceeding with the ordinary service and engaged in prayer when Jesus [a local leader] rose and began to question me about the furniture and uncoined silver which had been confiscated' and asking their whereabouts as well as of twenty pieces of gold. Josephus explains that he used that to pay the expenses of the Jewish deputation to Jerusalem, but agreed to reimburse the costs out of his own pocket. The public at the meeting began to be more on Josephus's side and it became in the interests of the leaders to remove them and continue the business with the council alone present, especially as the assembly in the prayer-house was now 'tumultuous'. Then Jonathan attempted to persuade the assembled Jews to agree that Josephus deserved to die, and he and his party laid hands on Josephus who fully expected to be murdered. The two bodyguards drew their swords on his behalf and he escaped.

It appears, therefore, from this account from the προσευχή in Tiberias that prayer at a public fast, by a large group of assembled Jews, could be interrupted for such matters as these, and that prolonged, heated political discussion took place in the prayer-house, on other days as well as on Saturday mornings.

Elsewhere in his writings Josephus speaks of ‘synagogues’ on three occasions, each time meaning Jewish buildings with religious and community functions at Antioch, Caesarea and Dora.⁶³ These descriptions are not in any sense in conflict with either his or Philo’s descriptions of προσευχαί, and can easily be understood as referring to the same type of building, but by a different name.

Describing the distribution of Jews in Syria, he claims that they were particularly numerous in Antioch, and that the successors of Antiochus Epiphanes ‘restored to the Jews of Antioch all such votive offerings as were made of brass, to be laid up in their synagogue’ which later attracted ‘richly designed and costly offerings’ as well.⁶⁴ Josephus also reports that the Jews there ‘were constantly attracting to their religious ceremonies multitudes of Greeks, and these they had in some measure incorporated with themselves’. The synagogue building in Antioch seems to have been large, richly endowed and prestigious enough in official eyes to take possession of returned religious artefacts and also able to attract approving public notice.

Josephus elsewhere paints a vivid picture of activities in and near a synagogue building in Caesarea where the Jews were being harassed by the local people.⁶⁵ The synagogue building adjoined a plot of ground owned by a Greek and though they had frequently tried to buy that land, offering much more than the market value for it, he refused to sell. And rather than accept their money, the owner, intending to annoy,

⁶³ See references in the following paragraphs.

⁶⁴ Josephus, *War* 7.43-45. The synagogue is referred to in parallel as a ‘shrine’ or ‘temple’ (ἱερόν)—which has caused some difficulty in translation and understanding; see footnotes in the Loeb edition.

⁶⁵ Josephus, *War* 2.284-92.

built workshops on the land and left only a narrow passage for access to the synagogue building.

Thereupon, some young hotheads among the Jews attacked the builders and tried to stop the work, but the governor Florus stopped the violence. The Jews paid Florus to make arrangements that the building work should stop, but having taken their money he welched on the bargain and left the two parties to 'fight the matter out'.

Josephus continues the story. 'On the following day, which was a sabbath, when the Jews assembled at the synagogue, they found that one of the Caesarean mischief-makers had placed beside the entrance a pot, turned bottom upwards, upon which he was sacrificing birds'. Obviously the Caesareans were aware that chicken entrails and blood spattered over the narrow entrance passageway would make it difficult or impossible for Jews to go in to the synagogue.⁶⁶ There was some discussion among the more peaceable Jews, but the young bloods on both sides were spoiling for a fight. Thus, in spite of the intervention of Jucundus, a cavalry commander, who came and removed the offending pot and tried to calm things down, a scuffle took place, after which the Jews 'snatched up their copy of the Law and withdrew to Narbata'.

Florus managed to evade responsibility for this fiasco by putting the Jewish deputation who complained to him in custody 'on the charge of having carried off the copy of the Law from Caesarea'.

⁶⁶ The footnotes of the Loeb edition suggest that an insult of being lepers was being levelled at the Jews by this action, giving Lev. 14.4-7 as source, but the parallel is not exact as the bird is there described as being slaughtered over fresh water in an earthenware vessel, and the pot in this story has been upended.

If we compare the account of the synagogue at Caesarea with our knowledge of προσευχαί from Philo, we find that Jews assemble in both on the sabbath, that a copy of the Law is available there and that raised tempers and physical violence are not at all ruled out of order.

Later Josephus writes of ‘the synagogue of the Jews’⁶⁷ at Dora, into which zealous young citizens brought an image of Claudius, in flagrant contradiction of the rights granted to Jews by Roman law.⁶⁸ The Roman governor of Syria, Petronius, takes up the Jews’ case and states that the introduction of the statue, apart from being contrary to an imperial edict, ‘prevented the Jews from having a synagogue’, and implies that its acceptability to Jews as a place of assembly was what made it into a synagogue. The term συναγωγή occurs three times in this description of events.

Here we see the same concept of ‘preventing the Jews from having a synagogue’ as was expressed in the writings of Philo in the phrase ‘losing their meeting-houses’, on both occasions caused by the introduction of a statue of a Roman emperor. Josephus does not follow this account with a description of veneration of the emperor taking place in the building, as Philo does, preferring to rest his case on the rights of freedom in matters of religion given to the Jews by Roman edicts.⁶⁹ But elsewhere he presents a picture of Jewish loyalty to the Roman state,⁷⁰ and also refers to the ‘payment of homage of another sort, secondary to that paid to God, to worthy men; such honours we do confer upon the emperors and people of Rome’—as opposed to erecting

⁶⁷ This phrase also occurs in Acts 13.5; 14.1; 17.1, 10, although with a different word order in Greek; see discussion in Chapter 6.

⁶⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities* 19.301.

⁶⁹ See Goldenberg, ‘Jewish Sabbath’, pp. 415–18.

⁷⁰ Josephus, *Apion* 2.68–74.

statues to the emperors.⁷¹ He specifies the honours as offering perpetual sacrifices daily in the Temple at the expense of the whole Jewish community.⁷² And he affirms that this signal honour was reserved for the emperors only and for no one else.

As for prayer, Josephus writes of prayer twice daily at dawn and before retiring as being expected of all Jews.⁷³ He describes the arms as outstretched during prayer,⁷⁴ which description Philo gave for Jews in the streets singing hymns of thanksgiving to God.⁷⁵

But apart from his references to 'the ordinary service' and to 'a public fast' being held in the prayer-house in Tiberias, Josephus depicts worship taking place only in the Temple. He states that the Jews have 'but one temple for the one God', and says that sacrifices and prayers for the community are offered there.⁷⁶ The sabbath meeting he describes at Tiberias was brought to an end because it was lunchtime, which is more typical of a committee meeting than of a worship service, and the only other possible reference he makes to sabbath practice, is to the lighting of lamps, but he does not say on what occasions they were lit.⁷⁷

Josephus's descriptions, therefore, provide corroborative evidence for many of the activities described by Philo for προσευχαί and συναγωγή, but he attributes them, in the main, to buildings and/or

⁷¹ Josephus, *Apion* 2.73-78.

⁷² Cf. the comments of Philo, *Embassy* 155-58, noted above.

⁷³ Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.212.

⁷⁴ Josephus, *War* 5.388.

⁷⁵ Philo, *Flaccus*, 120-23.

⁷⁶ Josephus, *Apion* 2.193; also a complete description of the sacrificial system is given at Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.236-54. But note that in spite of Josephus having written some of his works after the destruction of the Temple, he makes no reference to any transfer of the responsibility or practice of worship to any other place or institution.

⁷⁷ Josephus, *Apion* 2.282-83.

groups he calls 'synagogues'. But we have to remember that the multifaceted session at Tiberias, incorporating a complex mixture of religion and politics, and including prayer, eating, celebration of a public fast, discussion and physical violence, took place in a προσευχή, and that the prayers of the 'ordinary service' held there were on the Monday of a public fast, not on a sabbath.

NEW MOON IN THE WRITINGS OF JOSEPHUS

Josephus's writing on new moon are limited to his description of the offerings made by the sacrificial cult in the Temple and to his retelling of the narrative of the new moon meal offered by Saul to David.⁷⁸ He makes no references to its importance compared with other holy days.

COMPARISON OF THE DATA GAINED FROM PHILO AND JOSEPHUS

There are many items common to the descriptions of the gatherings of the Jews in the writings of Philo and Josephus. There is reinforcement of what has been known from Chapters 2 and 3, namely the resting from activity on the sabbath. Added to that there is the weekly sabbath gathering of, usually, the adult males of the community with the stated purpose of becoming thoroughly knowledgeable about Jewish laws and customs. Where buildings are described they are of different size and status, some being large and prestigious, others closely crowded amongst houses and shops. The introduction of graven images instantly invalidates the gathering place as far as the Jews are concerned, but the place has legal protection as part of the sanctioned

⁷⁸Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.238; 6.226-36.

freedom of the Jews to meet and practise their religion undisturbed in the cities of the Roman empire. Also there is the possibility of violent arguments and scuffles taking place in the meeting place.

Where these two sources differ are in the name they give to the building, and in the emphasis Philo gives to the didactic aspect of the meetings and to the role of the building in focussing the Jews' loyalty to the emperor in a public form. But these two aspects are not ruled out by anything Josephus says, rather they are not directly addressed. It is also relevant to note that Philo describes Jewish meeting-house activities on the sabbath in the same way for the two cities he knew, Alexandria and Rome, and expects other cities where Jews lived, including Jerusalem, to have identical institutions.

DISCUSSION ON THE EVIDENCE FROM PHILO AND JOSEPHUS

Much of the ground that I have discussed in this chapter, and also a great deal more, is outlined by Kee in his article about the changing nature and role of the synagogue in the first two centuries CE.⁷⁹ Kee reports with disfavour the conflation of the evidence of Philo and Josephus by earlier scholars into a composite picture labelled with the title 'synagogue' which also incorporates details gleaned from the Mishnah and Talmud. And trying to find a more acceptable explanation of the origin of the synagogue, he prefers to follow the view of Zeitlin 'that many institutions of a purely religious character came into existence as a result of social and economic forces',⁸⁰ rather than accept that religious needs alone brought about their existence. He

⁷⁹ Kee, 'Transformation', pp. 1-7. This article was published while my doctoral work was in progress and after I had completed the research and analysis for this Chapter.

⁸⁰ Zeitlin, 'Origin', p. 70.

believes that the synagogue was ‘initially a secular meeting house in post-exilic Judaism’, and that ‘it was only after 70 CE that the synagogue began to emerge as a distinctive institution with its own characteristic structure’.⁸¹ This means that, from Kee’s perspective, Philo cannot have known synagogues as such, but describes their forerunner, the meeting-house; and that Jesus and Paul could only have known gatherings on the sabbath like those described by Philo.⁸²

Zeitlin’s accurate summary of the data from Philo and Josephus, leads him to conclude that they both describe what Zeitlin refers to as the Jewish house of worship, by the same two Greek terms, but that Philo uses mainly προσευχή and Josephus uses mainly συναγωγή.⁸³ This agrees with my findings but the facts are seldom stated so succinctly and accurately elsewhere. Zeitlin draws the conclusion that the Jewish communities had assemblies to discuss communal matters, and that these assemblies *later* acquired religious characteristics.⁸⁴

Rivkin attempts an analysis of the way that Philo uses the word προσευχή, but does so in the belief that ‘Philo wrote at a time when there is abundant evidence that synagogues were flourishing’.⁸⁵ Rivkin does not cite the evidence he is referring to, but proceeds to divide Philo’s προσευχαί into two sorts, those which were ‘nonsubversive meeting houses ... symbols of loyalty to the emperors ... erected by the Jews from the time of the Ptolemies as evidence of Jewish loyalty to the “divine” monarchs ... offered to, and accepted by, the Ptolemies as a substitute for the erection of statues of the emperors and for the refusal

⁸¹ Kee, ‘Transformation’, pp. 3 (following Zeitlin), 7 (following Hoenig).

⁸² Kee, ‘Transformation’, pp. 17-18.

⁸³ Zeitlin, ‘Origin’, p. 73.

⁸⁴ Zeitlin, ‘Origin’, pp. 74-78, my emphasis.

⁸⁵ Rivkin, ‘Ben Sira’, pp. 350-51.

to worship them as gods', and those which were identical in function to synagogues. But again he does not give details of the synagogues.

Rivkin has correctly identified the two strands occurring together in Philo's descriptions of προσευχαί, and his perception of the building replacing a statue as a material expression of the people's loyalty to the emperor could be helpful.⁸⁶ But the idea of προσευχαί having one meaning in *Flaccus* and another in *The Embassy to Gaius* is, I feel, both unhelpful and unnecessary.⁸⁷ The one word and the one building could have carried out the two functions described by Philo. It also has to be said that Rivkin does not make a comparison with the writings of Josephus to see if the same distinction can be observed there.

Such a search reveals that it is possible that the one word, synagogue, also carries both functions in the works of Josephus. For, although he does not say where the Jews might have been expected by Apion to erect statues of the emperor, the discussion that follows is in terms of Greek home life and willingness to decorate their homes with statues of loved ones, contrasted with Jewish obedience to Moses in the matter of not carving images, homage to God, and worship in the Temple, implying that that is the home where such a statue might be expected by other religions; and Josephus does tell of the young men of Dora bringing a statue of an emperor into the synagogue there.⁸⁸ So it is likely that synagogues or προσευχαί are the sites most likely to be in his mind in this connection.

⁸⁶ Inscriptions can give this impression of the purpose of construction of the building; see Chapter 8.

⁸⁷ See Grabbe, 'Synagogues', pp. 401-402, n. 2, where this point is raised; also Sandmel, *The First Christian Century*, p. 102, n. 17, where Rivkin is taken to task for hypothesising an unnecessary distinction between *proseuche* and synagogue in order to strengthen his own argument.

⁸⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities* 19.299-306.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE EVIDENCE FROM PHILO AND JOSEPHUS

In contrast with the writings of Philo, where the meeting-house of the Jews is consistently referred to as the προσευχή, in the works of Josephus the word 'synagogue' is most commonly used, and the word προσευχή once, to represent the building which is in continuity with the modern synagogue, with the added aspect of political and belligerent behaviour. But neither Philo nor Josephus ever reports or describes a sabbath worship service having taken place.

The contributions of Zeitlin, Rivkin and Kee have highlighted the difficulties in conflating the pictures of Jewish sabbath activities described in Philo and Josephus. The pictures are not identical, though they do have common aspects. It can be convenient to explain the grosser differences either by Philo's wish to ingratiate the Jews with Caligula by stressing the amount of homage expressed towards the Emperor via the προσευχή, or by the differences to be expected between the central Mediterranean regions, including Rome and Alexandria, and the eastern Mediterranean regions of Palestine and its environs. Some differences can also be attributed to the passage of fifty years or so between Philo and Josephus. But the pictures presented do have a such an amount in common that the disparities do not lead me to suppose they belong to totally different activities and institutions.

Hence we may conclude that Jews, throughout and up to the end of the first century CE, did many things at their meetings in prayer-house or synagogue, not all of them religious or pacific. The usual name for the buildings in which they met was προσευχή, although in the

writings of Josephus, referring to Palestine and Syria, the alternative name synagogue is introduced.

In many towns and cities Jews studied their laws and ancestral customs together on the sabbath but communal worship on the sabbath is not described at all.

5. SABBATH AS A DOMESTIC CELEBRATION: GRAECO-ROMAN NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This study of the origins and location of Jewish sabbath *worship* will now be placed in a wider cultural context by including what may be learned from the writings of secular authors (Roman mainly, with a few Greek) from roughly 100 BCE to 150 CE, where the Jews and their institutions are described from the perspective of disdainful outsiders.¹

For these writers, Jews are part of their world, sometimes as exotic travellers or merchants from far away lands, telling tales of the Salt Sea and of the bitumen pits, or selling dates and flax of the highest quality. But Jews were also immigrants of the poorest sort, scraping a living on the fringes of Roman society.² They might also be slaves, perhaps bought from slavery elsewhere, perhaps captured in a military campaign,³ although it is possible that such slaves were few in number due to the alleged Jewish practice of ransoming their co-religionists as soon as possible.⁴ There were also former slaves emancipated by their masters, and thus Roman citizens.⁵

¹ See Stern, *Authors I*: Diodorus Siculus, Lucretius, Varro, Strabo, Virgil, Horace, Vitruvius, Scribonius Largus, Dioscorides, Seneca, Lucanus, Pliny the Elder, Statius, Martial; *Authors II*: Tacitus, Florus, Pausanias; also Whittaker, *Views*.

² Martial, *Epigrams* 12.57.7-14; Juvenal, *Satires* 3.12-16; 6.542-47; Cleomedes, *De motu*, 2.1.91; Artemidorus, *Dreams*, 53.

³ Petronius, *Satyricon* 68.6; Philo, *Embassy* 155.

⁴ Grant, *The Jews*, p. 62.

⁵ Philo, *Embassy* 155.

The writers take different stances and use different tones in their comments on, and descriptions of, Jews. They may show respect, misunderstanding, envy or disgust. The full range of emotions can easily be discovered, although sometimes they appear more clearly in the translation, than in the original text, perhaps because enhanced by attitudes held by translators.

Latin is a cryptic and compressed language, and in certain sentences, the various correct translations that may be given, completely alter the flavour of the writing. So the non-latinist reader is to some extent at the mercy of the assumptions and pre-judgments of translators. Where the difference could lead to one being possibly a mistranslation, or where the range of meaning can be shown, I have quoted more than one English version in the Appendix of Texts for Chapter 5.

Some of the texts studied are moral discourses, historical or geographical treatises and contain what are, as far as we can tell with hindsight, misapprehensions about Jews along with valid material. But many of the texts are written in a less didactic mode: law court orations, love poetry, satire. In these, irony, exaggeration and invective all abound. Jews, in the guise of their more noted characteristics, are used as a sort of shorthand to create an image in the mind of the reader. In order to take 'information' from such texts we have to absorb and take the measure of the writer's stance or avowed stance in the production of the text.⁶ This has involved a wider reading of the texts than merely the short sections to be quoted about Jews and their sabbaths.

⁶ All the writers studied are male, so non-inclusive language may be used without any erroneous implications.

Certain topics recur through all the texts and should be borne in mind as being constitutive of Jews to the Roman mind, or at least typical of Jews as they appear in metaphors, or as character parts in the more rhetorical forms of discourse.⁷ These are: the oddity of circumcision, Jewish lechery or lustfulness, Jewish abstention from pork, Jews as beggars, fortune-tellers and dream interpreters, Jews wasting one day in seven in idleness, Jews making up a close-knit separatist community with laws and moral standards of its own. As Goldenberg states, 'Judaism remained *for the Roman élite* an exotic Oriental importation ... to observe the sabbath meant to enter a world of lower-class ignorant Jews, half-Jews and gentile fellow travelers.'⁸ This description represents the perceived image of Jewry for educated Romans.

It is convenient to divide the writers into two groups, those writing before the common era and those writing after the turn of the era.

TEXTS AND WRITERS FROM BEFORE THE COMMON ERA⁹

At this period the writers were aware of the Jews as a part of Roman life, but there seems to be no particular singling out of the Jewish nation for the purposes of ridicule, nor is there any animus directed against the Jewishness of Jews.

⁷ Robinson, *Sixteen Satires*, p. 49, defines rhetoric as: the public use of words and gestures to produce an emotion in the listener which the speaker does not feel himself, although he seems to.

⁸ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', pp. 441-42 (my emphasis).

⁹ See also the Appendix of Texts for Chapter 5.

Meleager, a Gadarene, wrote several love poems to Demo in the first century BCE,¹⁰ and in one of them tortures himself by imagining that he has been displaced in love by a passionate Jew.

1 The Greek Anthology, V, 160

White-cheeked Demo, someone hath thee naked¹¹ next him and is taking his delight, but my own heart groans within me. If thy lover is some great Sabbath-keeper, no great wonder. Love burns hot even on cold Sabbaths. (LCL)

He knows that Jews light no fires on the sabbath, but also knows that they do not abstain from love.

Cicero, the lawyer and rhetorician, writing in 69 BCE, knows quite different things about Jews.¹² In Extract 2, he sets about defending the arraigned public official, Flaccus, in the time-honoured way, by discrediting the witnesses and supporters of the other side.

2 Pro Flacco 28.66-67

66 Then there is that unpopularity over the Jewish gold. This is presumably why this case is being heard not far from the Aurelian¹³ steps. It was for this particular charge, Laelius, that you sought this site and that crowd. You know how vast a throng it is, how close-knit, and what influence it can have in public meetings. 67 To oppose this outlandish superstition was an act of firmness, and to defy in the public interest the crowd of Jews that on occasions sets our public meetings ablaze was the height of responsibility. (LCL)

¹⁰ Meleager, *Anthology* 5.160; also Whigham and Jay, *Meleager*, pp. 21, 22, where Jay indicates in his literal translations of the poems that Demo was a woman.

¹¹ The translation of Stern reads 'named' for 'naked'.

¹² Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28.66-69; this Flaccus has no connection with the Flaccus apostrophised by Philo.

¹³ Pun on *aurum*, gold.

He feels somewhat out-manoeuvred by his young opponent Laelius, who has set the trial in a very public place, where Jews were able to attend and make their views heard.¹⁴ (Cicero was, politically speaking, in the other party from that backed by the generality of Jews.¹⁵) So the clever rhetorician tries to disarm the Jews' influence, by speaking of it at the outset. But if I remove the edge from his voice, what does he say about Jews? They are numerous, they are united, they are influential. These descriptions can be either positive or negative, depending on your point of view.

Much is made of the fact that Cicero describes Judaism as a 'barbara superstitio'—outlandish superstition.¹⁶ Commentators regard Cicero's 'unfriendly remarks'¹⁷ as milking the 'natural prejudice of the Romans against a people who had been subdued by Roman arms only a few years previously'.¹⁸ But Cicero defends his compatriot Flaccus, in the same aggressive way that he defends others, by practising character assassination on those bringing the charges, those who allege they have been damaged by the defendant.

Flaccus, while acting as a Roman magistrate, had removed or flouted a Jewish privilege, so Cicero defends him by making out that 'the Jews are a tiresome people whose "superstition" it is a virtue to oppose'.¹⁹ But this is clearly Cicero's way of defusing the power of the

¹⁴ But note the contradictory view of Grant, *The Jews*, pp. 55, 62, that Cicero exaggerated the size and power of the Jewish community in Rome.

¹⁵ See the extended discussion of this incident in Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 5-8.

¹⁶ Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28.67.

¹⁷ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 41.

¹⁸ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 7; see also Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 173.

¹⁹ Smallwood, *Roman Rule*, pp. 126-27.

Jews, and it should be noted that the worst he says about them is that they are 'tiresome'.

Denigrating the national character of opponents was common practice in his defence speeches. His remarks about Gauls as credible witnesses in the trial of Fonteius are most unpleasant: 'is any the most honourable native of Gaul to be set on the same level with even the meanest citizen of Rome ... ?' And he is no kinder to Sardinians during the trial of Scaurus when he says: 'See now, gentlemen, to what families, how foul, how polluted, how degraded, you are called upon to surrender the family of Scaurus'.²⁰ The Jews receive no worse insults than any other non-Romans.

I would characterise Cicero's main emotion as he directs his prepared remarks 'at' the Jews in the crowd, as healthy respect tinged with envy, for he states quite plainly that the Jews are influential. I am sure that if the Jews had been his supporters, their qualities would have been a source of much praise and not censure.

Horace, the statesman and writer of humorous poetry, lived in the latter half of the first century BCE. His writings show that he was aware of several of the features of Jews, as characterised in the Roman consciousness, and was able to use them to enliven his poems.²¹ These are: that Jewish enthusiasm and insistence bring in converts (Extract 3), that Jews are credulous, i.e. they are willing to believe things that seem to be impossible, without the customary

²⁰ Cicero, *Pro Fonteio* 26 (the translation is quoted correctly), *Pro Scauro* 13.

²¹ Horace, *Satires* 1.4, 139-43; 1.5, 96-104; 1.9, 60-78; the apparent confusion of 'the thirtieth' and 'a sabbath' is unresolvable.

logical arguments (Extract 4), and that Jews do not transact business on the sabbath (Extract 5).

3 Satires, I, 4. 139-143

we [poets], like the Jews, will compel you to make one of our throng. (LCL)

4 Satires, I, 5. 96-104

Apella, the Jew may believe it, not I ... (LCL)

5 Satires, I, 9. 60-78

'Today is the thirtieth day, a Sabbath. Would you affront the circumcised Jews?' 'I have no scruples', say I 'But I have. I am a somewhat weaker brother, one of the many.' (LCL)

In Extract 5 he describes a situation when he, Horace, caught in the street on a sabbath by a frightful bore, pretends to another passing friend, Fuscus, that he wishes to talk some private business with him, all in the hope of being rescued from the bore. But his malicious friend gives an unhelpful reply, using the sabbath observance of Jews as his reason. In the by-going he does speak in offensive language about how the putative conversation of Horace might insult Jews,²² showing by this low kind of humour that the excuse is bogus, and at the same time showing the Jewish sabbath to be something of little real value to him, but of such value to them, that to disparage it would cause them affront.

Bacchiocchi feels that Horace makes 'sneers and jibes' at the Jews,²³ and Simon accuses him of sarcasms.²⁴ But other

²² Oppedere: to break wind at (*A Latin Dictionary*); to fart in the face of (*Oxford Latin Dictionary*).

²³ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 173.

²⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 280.

commentators, of whom Michael is typical, do not stress that aspect and rather point out that here Horace makes plain that many Romans do consider Jewish sensibilities about the sabbath for Fuscus's throw-away line could have no meaning if the Jewish sabbath did not command widespread respect.²⁵

An interesting point about these three references to Jews in Horace is that they are all at the end of the satire in which they appear. They are all part of the climax of the pieces—almost a closing leitmotif, or a signal that he is reaching a satirical punchline. The funny story or comment about the Jews is the signal to smile and to applaud the final flourish of the satire.

As Gager points out, the historian **Pompeius Trogus**, writing in the first century BCE,²⁶ was 'capable of writing about them [the Jews] in a dispassionate, sympathetic, and occasionally admiring manner',²⁷ and was aided in doing so by the fact that he cast his history in a strongly aetiological mould, which allowed portrayal of the Jews as unsociable or even misanthropic without any sense of hostility being attached to those descriptions. Thus his writings contributed to the 'positive image of Judaism projected during Augustus's reign by various Greek writers'.²⁸ In Extract 6, Pompeius Trogus describes the Jews as having consecrated the sabbath as a perpetual fast day, hallowed for all time.

²⁵ Michael, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 118; cf. Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 438.

²⁶ Pompeius Trogus, preserved by Justinus in *Historiae Philippicae, Epitoma* 36, 2.14-16.

²⁷ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 72.

²⁸ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 71-72, 86-87.

6 Justinus, *Historiae Philippicae*, Epitoma 36, 2.14-16

... he (Moses), for all time, consecrated the seventh day, which used to be called Sabbath by the custom of the nation, for a fast day ... they took care, in order that they might not become odious, from the same cause (fear of spreading infection), to their neighbours, to have no communication with strangers; a rule which, from having been adopted on that particular occasion, gradually became a religious institution ... and ever afterwards it was a custom among the Jews to have the same persons both for kings and priests; and, by their justice combined with religion, it is almost incredible how powerful they became. (Watson)

The confusion of the ban on cooking with a requirement to fast is common in many of the writings of the time.²⁹ But Pompeius Trogus does conceive of the day as being held sacred.

In my opinion this confusion over sabbath and fasting could possibly be visible in, or have arisen from, the writings of Josephus,³⁰ for, in a section describing how the Jews have had many imitators, he says:

The masses have long shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread, and where the fasts and the lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed.

²⁹ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', pp. 435-42 has a thorough discussion of this confused understanding of sabbath praxis—although he does not refer to the piece from Josephus discussed below; see also Michael, 'Jewish Sabbath', pp. 122-24.

³⁰ Josephus, *Apion* 2.282-83.

This passage, whether by chance or on purpose, definitely links sabbath rest, fasting, the lighting of lamps and food rules —though, as far as we know, there was no requirement to fast on the sabbath.

Pompeius Trogus remarks on the Jews' separatism, explaining it by an aetiology. He says it began as a Jewish way of protecting themselves against odium being occasioned by their having spread contagion to neighbouring tribes, but it remained as a religious embargo. He comments on the Jews' singularly successful and powerful combination of having the same people as rulers and priests, this being more than usually effective because they held religion and justice in their hands at the one time. But he does not make any pejorative comments about these conclusions.

Ovid, writing around the turn of the era,³¹ also knows the sabbath as a weekly day held sacred (*sacra*) by Jews (or Palestine Syrians, a synonym for Jews³²), and twice refers to it as a day as suitable as any other for finding a new sweetheart (Extracts 7 and 8). He lists all the places, weathers and occasions that might wrongly be considered unsuitable for finding a sweetheart—including the sabbath as a an example of a time that some might avoid. But in his view the sacredness of the day to the Jews, along with the other superstitions and legends he quotes, should not cause any Roman male to curtail his amatory pursuits, in fact the sabbath would be more suitable than the woman's birthday.³³

³¹ Ovid, *The Art of Love* 1.75-70, 413-16.

³² Stern, *Authors*, I, pp. 348-49; Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 204.

³³ A similar point, but in terms of Saturn's sacred day rather than the Jewish sabbath, is made by the poet Tibullus writing in the late first century BCE; see Stern, *Authors* I, pp. 318-20.

7 Art of Love, 1.75-78

Nor let Adonis bewailed of Venus escape you, nor the seventh day that the Syrian Jew holds sacred. Avoid not the Memphian shrine of the linen-clothed heifer: many a maid does she make what she was herself to Jove.(LCL)

8 Art of Love, 1.413-17

You may begin on the day on which woeful Allia flows stained with the blood of Latin wounds, or on that day, less fit for business, whereon returns the seventh day feast that the Syrian of Palestine observes. But hold in awful dread your lady's birthday ... (LCL)

Goldenberg is unwilling to regard as neutral Ovid's persistent use of 'foreign' or 'Syrian' when describing the sabbath, and sees it as pejorative about the Jews' holy day.³⁴ It seems to me that Ovid uses colourful imagery from all the cultural richness of Roman society, and is not using these descriptions to demean those who follow the cults or believe the superstitions.

Leon considers Ovid to go so far as to recommend the sabbath as 'a favourable time for courting a girl'.³⁵ But Michael, begging the questions of the existence at that time of either synagogue buildings³⁶ or sabbath worship services, goes further and insists that this extract means that the hopeful lover should go to sabbath synagogue services and look for a young Roman woman there.³⁷ He claims that Ovid 'must mean that he should attend the Sabbath services held in the Jewish synagogues' and he goes on '[a]nd what meaning is there

³⁴ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 436.

³⁵ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 13.

³⁶ See Stern, *Authors*, II, discussion on Artemidorus, p. 330.

³⁷ Michael, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 119.

in the counsel unless Roman maidens were wont to attend those services?' Grant repeats these same conclusions, and, unfairly in my view, attributes them to Ovid himself.³⁸ Michael also assumes that the generality of Roman women spent the sabbath in rest or idleness.³⁹ He appears unable to conceive of women being courted while about their daily tasks. From his perspective, courtship belongs to one's leisure hours, and therefore the young Roman women of the poet's imagination must have had leisure on the sabbath. Michael makes the same argument here as he did for the poems of Horace—that the poet's allusion indicates widespread knowledge of, and respect for, Jewish practices—but because of the assumptions he inserts into the middle of the argument, it is not so reliable here. So, while the Horace text can be used to indicate widespread Roman knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the Jewish sabbath, the Ovid text cannot, in all honesty, be used to prove that young Roman women spent their sabbath leisure at synagogue services, where they were available to the approaches of a would-be lover. This is speculation run riot.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE WRITINGS BCE AND AT THE TURN OF THE ERA

Meleager, Horace and Ovid use references to Jews to enliven or colour their poetry, Pompeius Trogus respects the Jews, and Cicero has a healthy respect for them. The sabbath is a day held sacred for all time, with no fires, and no cooking, popularly construed as no

³⁸ Grant, *The Jews*, pp. 62-63.

³⁹ Michael, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 120.

eating either. No activities special to the sabbath in which Jews participate are described.

TEXTS AND WRITERS CE

Apart from Seneca and Frontinus, who are fairly neutral in their comments, the writers of the later first century CE found the Jews a bit more threatening, in that Jews were more respectable now, both ideologically and socio-economically. There is an edge of discomfort discernible in what is written as the Jews show signs of outshining or ousting Romans in situations where it really matters. The Jews are 'put in their place' by mockery at all levels of severity, from gentle jibes to bitter sarcasm.

Seneca, the philosopher and dramatist, in his *Moral Letters*,⁴⁰ speaking about how a person's intentions condition the value of their actions, goes on to discuss the necessity in life of striving to do one's duty and seeking the Supreme Good. He follows this by criticising different ways in which the gods are worshipped.

9 Moral Letters 95.47

Precepts are commonly given as to how the gods should be worshipped. But let us forbid lamps to be lighted on the Sabbath, since the gods do not need light, neither do men take pleasure in soot. Let us forbid men to offer morning salutation and to throng the doors of temples; mortal ambitions are attracted by such ceremonies, but God* is worshipped by those who truly know him. (LCL)

*or: a god [my translation]

⁴⁰ Seneca, *Moral Letters* 95.47; see also the phrase 'lighting of lamps' in Josephus already quoted above.

Commentators note that he describes the practice of Jews of lighting lamps on Friday evening when the sabbath is welcomed into the home, but they have not noticed that Seneca regards this as how Jews *worship* God, and that he thinks it is too trivial a way to worship any god worthy of the name.⁴¹ Leon comes close to realising this but uses the phrase ‘paying homage to one’s gods’ of Seneca’s understanding of the lamp lighting,⁴² rather than recognising in the description a Roman perception of Jewish worship of the one God. Seneca sees the Jews involved in these practices, as Jews going about the business of worship, but he cannot see that any of it is of value to God or a god (the two forms are indistinguishable in Latin, there being no articles). He is not ‘railing against the customs of this “accursed race”’, as Bacchiocchi avers,⁴³ rather, as Whittaker puts it, ‘Seneca is deprecating any ritual which might seem to belittle the transcendence of God’.⁴⁴

But why should Seneca regard these homely ritual activities as worship? The only reason can be that these things are the answer to some question such as: ‘What different things do Jews do to celebrate their holy day, the sabbath?’ And Seneca lists what he knows. He knows only of lighting sabbath lamps, offering morning, i.e. every morning, salutations and thronging the doors of ‘temples’;⁴⁵ so these are the actions he criticises. He knows nothing of services of worship,

⁴¹ See the discussion of the worship of gods in their temples by Rattray in ‘Worship’.

⁴² Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 245.

⁴³ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, pp. 173-74.

⁴⁴ Whittaker, *Views*, p. 72.

⁴⁵ Possibly these last two do not refer to Judaism, but in Mark 12.38, the voice of Jesus, in a similar way, censures the scribes for salutations in the market place.

nothing of prayers or psalm-singing, nothing of reading, expounding and discussing the Law of Moses, practices described by Philo, Josephus, and New Testament authors.⁴⁶ He describes nothing particular to the sabbath except the lighting of lamps. And although it is not absolutely clear from the text, he may also know of, and be describing, the gathering of Jews for daily services of morning prayers.

In Extract 10 Augustine preserves Seneca's views on Jewish customs and laws.⁴⁷

10 Augustine City of God 6.11 quoting On Superstition

Along with other superstitions of the civil theology Seneca also censures the sacred institutions of the Jews, especially the sabbath. He declares that their practice is inexpedient, because by introducing one day of rest in every seven they lose in idleness almost a seventh of their life, and by failing to act in times of urgency, they often suffer loss ... But when speaking of the Jews he says: 'Meanwhile the customs of this accursed race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout all the world. The vanquished have given laws to their victors.' He shows his surprise as he says this, not knowing what was being wrought by the providence of God. But he adds a statement that shows what he thought of their system of sacred institutions: 'The Jews, however, are aware of the origin and meaning of their rites. The greater part of the people go through a ritual not knowing why they do so.' (LCL)

Augustine relates that Seneca censured the Jews for wasting a seventh of their lives in sabbath rest, but he also, in all fairness,

⁴⁶ Philo, *Embassy* 157; *Moses* 2.216; *Special Laws* 2.59-64; *Hypothetica* 7.9-13; *Contemplative Life* 27-33; *Dreams* 123-28; Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.40-46; *Life* 272-303; Mark 1.21; 6.2; Acts 15.21; 18.4.

⁴⁷ Seneca, *On Superstition*, preserved in Augustine, *City of God*, 6.11.

remarks on the fact that while the Jews have been vanquished by other races, their laws have been adopted 'throughout all the world',⁴⁸ and also that the Jews are 'aware of the origin and meaning of their rites', which awareness he contrasts with most people's ignorance of such matters. It is interesting that Josephus, writing at a time very close to Seneca, makes a similar set of comments when he writes:

The masses have long since shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread and where our fasts and the lighting of lamps and many of our prohibitions in the matter of food are not observed.⁴⁹

Josephus also reports that the Jews in Antioch 'were constantly attracting to their religious ceremonies multitudes of Greeks, and these they had in some measure incorporated with themselves'.⁵⁰ These two writers, from very different backgrounds, share a common belief in the spread of Jewish customs and a common knowledge of the lighting of lamps and of sabbath rest.

We should at this point note the opinion of Goldenberg, that Seneca believed non-Jews were adopting Jewish practices and that he 'was anxious to keep the practice from spreading'.⁵¹ With this view Grant concurs,⁵² for he detects in Seneca a 'strongly anti-Jewish

⁴⁸ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 42, 250, understands this as referring negatively to Jewish proselytising activity; see also Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 60.

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Apion* 2.282-83, already quoted above in reference to fasting.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *War* 7.43-45.

⁵¹ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 434.

⁵² Grant, *The Jews*, p. 176.

attitude' and 'great annoyance' which caused him to complain about the spread of Jewish customs. There is a fine balance of interpretation at work here, and perhaps this is a case where the presuppositions of commentators can be most easily seen. For Seneca writes only of the spread of Jewish laws, not of the spread of the sabbath evening domestic habits, and it is unfair to conflate these two sections of Seneca's writings in this way, especially bearing in mind that one has been preserved by another writer, in this case Augustine.

I also find it hard to agree with Stern that 'Seneca was the first Latin writer to give vent to deliberate animadversions on the Jewish religion and its impact on Roman society',⁵³ and more readily endorse the views of Gager, who devotes a full chapter to discussing the neutral or positive descriptions of Jews and Judaism by Romans, and finds that by many commentators 'this [neutral or positive] evidence is simply overlooked', as they wish to make the case that 'the ancient world in general, and the early Roman Empire in particular, disliked Jews'.⁵⁴ This negative view is most clearly expressed by Grant, when he says that 'all the old Roman prejudices against the Jews still remained actively rampant' and indicts Juvenal, Plutarch and Epictetus along with 'other writers of the generations before and after him ... in reviving the time-worn attacks against Jewish imageless monotheism, abstinence from pork, circumcision, Sabbath observation and mendicant fortune telling'.⁵⁵ In my opinion, Grant has read all these writers through a particular lens of sensitivity to

⁵³ Stern, *Authors I*, p. 429.

⁵⁴ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 67-88, esp. p. 82.

⁵⁵ Grant, *The Jews*, p. 240.

slights to Jews and has seen much negativity expressed in the texts which is not visible to other commentators or to me.

Seneca seems to me to pass a variety of comments on the Jews, some praising and some deflating the value of Judaism as a religion, but none expressing hostility to Jews or to customs and laws of Jewish origin, *merely* because of their Jewishness. If he criticises behaviours it is for something in the behaviour itself, rather than for that one aspect, its ethnic origin. Thus I am happy to regard Seneca's comment as reflecting what he really thought the Jews actually did to celebrate their religion on their holy day, the sabbath, that is, they lit lamps and they stopped work.

Persius, born in 34 CE, was a writer of very complex poetry,⁵⁶ who died young in 62 CE. He wrote to promote Stoicism and yet, in Extract 11, gives an evocative picture of the Jewish sabbath which, according to Stern, is 'much more vivid and true to the reality of the sabbath celebrated by the Jews than most allusions to Jewish customs in ancient literature'.⁵⁷

11 Satires 5. 176-84

And that white-robed wheedler there, dragged open-mouthed by his thirst for office—is he his own master? Up with you before dawn and deal out showers of chick peas for the people to scramble for, that old men sunning themselves in their old age may tell of the splendour of our Floralia. How grand. But when the day of Herod comes round, when the lamps wreathed with

⁵⁶ Persius, *Satires*, in Conington, *Persius*, pp. 118-19; in Ramsay, *Juvenal and Persius*, LCL, pp. 386-89; in Jenkinson, *Satires*, p. 53, and see especially Jenkinson's analysis of the complexity of Persius' rhetoric in the notes at pp. 91-92; in Harvey, *Persius*, pp. 176-78.

⁵⁷ Stern, *Authors I*, p. 435.

violets and ranged round the greasy window-sills have spat forth their thick clouds of smoke, when the floppy tunnies' tails are curled round the dishes of red ware, and the white jars are swollen out with wine, you silently twitch your lips, turning pale at the sabbath of the circumcised. (LCL)

Persius is making mock of a young man caught in the grip of ambition, who steadfastly follows all the moves in the political game, hoping for advancement; then, with what looks like an astonishing mood change, Persius continues by describing the beginning of sabbath in a Jewish home as seen from the street by a passer-by.

Here, as in Seneca, the only sabbath activities described are those which happen in the home on Friday evening. The items are domestic, and culinary. Harvey regards the fish tails and the red dishes as a sign of Jewish poverty, describing them as 'poor fare and poor ware', fish tails being the poorer cut;⁵⁸ but Conington thinks that having the fishes' tails curled round the dish indicates the buying of whole tunnies, surely a sign of reasonable financial circumstances.⁵⁹ This is another good example of how the interpreter's attitudes can completely alter the perceived meaning of the texts.

But the very last phrase of this piece alters the mood of the quotation, for it seems to refer to some prayer or other spoken ritual. Leon takes the meaning to be prayer of the one observed rather than reaction of the observer for he translates the phrase as 'the awed prayer of silently moving lips on the "circumcised Sabbath"'.⁶⁰ Here, as in his reading of Seneca, Goldenberg interprets Persius's picture

⁵⁸ Harvey, *Persius*, pp. 177-78.

⁵⁹ Conington, *Persius*, p. 120, nn. 182, 183.

⁶⁰ Leon, pp. 38-39; note also that Gager, p. 56, and Harvey, p. 178, n. 184, remark that Persius uses the adjective 'circumcised' as a synonym for Jew.

as less than sympathetic to the observed sabbath activities of Jews because he feels it paints the atmosphere of the sabbath as 'one of dread, of unpleasant mystery, sordid ugliness, disgusting superstition'.⁶¹ Goldenberg uses seven negative word images to transmit his understanding of Persius's picture of the sabbath and feels Persius writes out of 'hostility' and 'unfamiliarity with the activities described'.⁶²

An alternate view of the dynamics of the last line of Persius's description is given by Harvey, who suggests that the person described might be showing 'the unreasoning terror of the superstitious man on festal days (as opposed to the faith of the religious man)',⁶³ but here Harvey also seems to carry some religious freight of his own, in the point of view expressed parenthetically.

Jenkinson argues that '[f]lowers and silent prayer, however, do not seem to belong especially to Jewish ritual either in fact or elsewhere in the ancient imagination',⁶⁴ so he regards the phrase about the violet-wreathed lamps as unrelated to actual Jewish practice, thus endorsing Goldenberg's perception of Persius as revealing unfamiliarity with Jewish practices.

The meaning of the phrase 'labra moves tacitus recutitaque sabbata palles' will vary depending on whose lips it is placed, and to what emotion is being portrayed by the description. And that is a vexed question. Conington regards the passage as dealing with the lack of freedom experienced by people in the thrall of either ambition

⁶¹ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 435; also Goldenberg, 'Rabbinic Judaism', pp. 31-44.

⁶² Goldenberg, 'Rabbinic Judaism', p. 37.

⁶³ Harvey, *Persius*, p. 178, n. 184.

⁶⁴ Jenkinson, *Satires*, p. 92, n. 42.

or Judaism.⁶⁵ But Conington contradicts himself as to whether the passage implies that one person is a slave to the different superstitions one after the other,⁶⁶ or whether different people with one strong superstition each are being described in turn.⁶⁷

Neither Jenkinson nor Harvey, in common with other commentators, looks at the possibility that the political aspirant is the *same person* as the observer of the Jewish sabbath. But suppose the man seeking preferment in Rome is a Jew. Then after all his fine parading in public places in a 'blanco'ed toga',⁶⁸ and, in spite of his courting favour in the usual manner of Romans, he still, in private on Friday evenings, reverts to the customs of his forefathers, and rather low-class customs at that—from a Roman perspective, of course. He returns to the weekly meal of fish, prefaced by the saying of prayers.

This is my reading of the stanza, and allows for the mood change to happen in the mind of the young man, and for the reader to be taken through the same shifting and disorientating experience of the contrast of high, foreign, i.e. Roman, ambitions back to humble, ethnic background and beginnings.⁶⁹

This could be Persius's piquant way of warning Roman society that Jews are not only immigrants and underlings any more, but are ready to take important roles in society, while still persisting in their own separatist and thus 'inferior' ways—always a great infamy in Roman eyes.

⁶⁵ Conington, *Persius*, p. 118, nn. 176-88.

⁶⁶ Conington, *Persius*, p. 120, n. 185.

⁶⁷ Conington, *Persius*, p. 118, nn. 176-88; see also Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 174.

⁶⁸ Jenkinson's literal translation of *cretata* (Jenkinson, *The Satires*, p. 91, n. 41).

⁶⁹ As with the satires of Horace, this piece about a Jew ends the satire.

Petronius, a contemporary of Seneca and Persius, wrote a vulgar and humorous novel, *The Satyricon*, about the fortunes of three rather ramshackle travellers. Extract 12⁷⁰ shows that their conversation flows very smoothly from the description of a slave as being circumcised, through his likeness to Venus, and on to lust and lechery—seemingly a common view held about Jews, and used here to paint a vivid and slightly denigrating picture of this apparently attractive slave.

12 *Satyricon* 68.8

He has only two faults, and if he were rid of them he would be simply perfect. He is circumcised and he snores. For I do not mind his being cross-eyed; he has a look like Venus. So that is why he cannot keep silent, and scarcely ever shuts his eyes. I bought him for three hundred denarii. (LCL)

In Extract 13⁷¹ the three rascals seize on circumcision as one mode of disguise in a tight corner, an alternative to chalking their faces to the rarely tanned whiteness of Gauls or piercing their ears to be like Arabians.

13 *Satyricon* 102. 14

and please circumcise us too, so that we look like Jews ... (LCL)

Again there is a kind of flavour of pantomime about the importation of Jewish characteristics into the mental images conjured up by the three prospective disguises. But Extract 14,⁷² a

⁷⁰ Petronius, *Satyricon* 68.8.

⁷¹ Petronius, *Satyricon* 102.14.

⁷² Petronius, *Fragmenta* 37.

fragment only, although couched in fairly offensive language, does add a bit to our knowledge of how Jews and their sabbaths were perceived.

14 Fragments, 37

The Jew may worship his pig-god and clamour in the ears of high heaven, but unless he also cuts back his foreskin with the knife,⁷³ he shall go forth from the people and emigrate to Greek cities, and shall not tremble⁷⁴ at the fasts of Sabbath imposed by the law. (LCL)

Grant regards Petronius, like his contemporary Seneca, as sneering at the sabbath,⁷⁵ but I feel that he is detecting an author's intention of racism on the basis of the extravagant language of poetry.

The Jews are described as venerating the pig, because of their abstention from eating pork. This led to an erroneous Roman belief that the Jews' God was somehow linked to pigs. But then Petronius describes Jews as clamouring in the ears of high heaven, which seems quite a fair description of first, where God lives, and secondly, how one best has a dialogue with him. Circumcision is quite clearly understood as an absolute 'must' for becoming a Jew. So far the offensiveness of these remarks lies in the extravagance of the language used in the descriptions rather than in any distortion of Jewish praxis.

⁷³ 'and unties its tightly-knotted head' [missing line, my translation].

⁷⁴ The translation 'tremble' presupposes the reading *tremet*, Bücheler's emendation. The translation of Michael follows the original text: 'he will be driven from among his people and will migrate to the cities of Greece where he will cease to oppress the Sabbath with his fasting law'.

⁷⁵ Grant, *The Jews*, p. 176.

Then follows an enigmatic sentence about emigration. Stern understands excommunication as the reason implied for the moving away to Greek cities,⁷⁶ but it is possible that some other issue of membership or proselytism is being addressed here.

The last line of the fragment deals tantalisingly with sabbath law. The Loeb edition quoted by Stern uses an emended text and reads, 'and shall not tremble at the fasts of Sabbath imposed by law'.⁷⁷ But the translation of Michael uses the original text and reads, 'where he will cease to oppress the Sabbath with his fasting law'.⁷⁸ This seems to imply that there might be an 'unoppressed' sabbath that did not include a fasting law, but was a day of rest and happiness. Or it could imply that there was some type of semi-Jew, or quasi-Jew, who worshipped God and shouted to him in highest heaven, but was not willing to be circumcised and went to Greek cities where he did not oppress the sabbath with a hungry or fasting law. So this description could refer to an early Christian convert who had been attracted to the teaching and precepts of Judaism but feared the circumcising knife and was not bound to observe the sabbath.

Whatever the meaning of the text, the sabbath is pictured as controlling life in a negative way, somehow oppressing or restricting the sabbath-day activities of adherents to the Jewish faith. This is a concept that was displayed also in the texts of *Jubilees* and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

⁷⁶ Stern, *Authors*, I, 444.

⁷⁷ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 174, adopts and comments on this translation, but I am unable to trace a translation of Fragment 37 by M. Heseltine, as quoted by Stern, and have relied on the French translation of Ernout and my own translation.

⁷⁸ Michael, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 123.

Frontinus, in Extract 15,⁷⁹ from his book of military strategy written in the late first century CE, adds a religious understanding of sabbath observance, by stating that it was 'sinful' [*nefas*] for Jews to do business on the sabbath.

15 Stratagems 2.1.17

The deified Augustus Vespasian attacked the Jews on the day of Saturn, a day on which it is sinful for them to do any business ... (LCL)

This interpretation of sabbath observance as a moral or religious obligation is a more sympathetic view of Jewish abstention from work than the common accusation of idleness.

Martial, who began life poor, but came to be accepted in the literary circles of the late first century CE, is a most pungent humourist and is often both cutting and obscene. For these reasons it has been difficult to find adequate translations of his works except for those published recently. Up till the Loeb edition of 1968,⁸⁰ translators were willing to convert the more explicit poems into either French⁸¹ or, rather more commonly, Italian,⁸² or to leave them untranslated.⁸³ But as Sullivan has stated, Martial's flattery of Domitian, and his obscenity in writing, 'have blinded the supposedly neutral and value-free interpreter ... and prevented a proper appreciation of Martial's value as a poet and a witness of his times'.⁸⁴ The more liberated

⁷⁹ Frontinus, *Stratagems* 2.1.17.

⁸⁰ Martial, *Epigrams*.

⁸¹ Martial, *Epigrammes* I and II (tr. H.J. Izaac).

⁸² Martial, *Epigrams* (Bohn edition).

⁸³ Pott and Wright, *Martial*, p. 207.

⁸⁴ Sullivan, 'Synchronic and Diachronic Aspects', p. 215.

mores from the sixties onwards have allowed a fresh look at Martial's picture of Roman society.

In Extract 16,⁸⁵ he is abusing a woman called Bassa because of her body odours (female body odours were obnoxious to Martial⁸⁶), and he says that he would prefer the breath of fasting Sabbatarian females (the Latin is feminine), fasting Jewesses, one might say, to her smell.

16 Epigrams 4.4

The stench of the bed of a drained marsh; of the raw vapours of sulphur springs; the putrid reek of a sea-water fishpond; of a stale he-goat in the midst of his amours; of the military boot of a fagged out veteran; of a fleece twice dyed with purple; of the breath of fasting Sabbatarian women (Jews: Ker 1968); of the sighs of depressed defendants; of filthy Leda's lamp as it expires; of ointment made of dregs of Sabine oil; of a wolf in flight; of a viper's lair—all these stenches would I prefer to your stench, Bassa. (LCL)

This does not tell us that Jews fasted on sabbath, *pace* Stern,⁸⁷ but it does say that Jewish women when fasting, had some sort of smell that Martial could expect his readers to recognise and to agree was unpleasant. This indicates that the Jews had alien food habits, which produce differently scented sweat, and allowed the 'other' to be identified by smell. It tells us that the two cultures were separate and that the Jews were, or were thought to be, in a socially inferior position, where they could safely be described, even insulted, in this way.

⁸⁵ Martial, *Epigrams* 4.4.

⁸⁶ Sullivan, 'Synchronic and Diachronic Aspects', p. 223.

⁸⁷ Stern, *Authors*, I, p. 521.

In Extract 17⁸⁸ the ‘circumcised Jews’ are listed in the company of powerful sexual athletes from all over the Eastern Mediterranean who delight Caelia and who leave her with little enthusiasm for Romans—such as Martial himself—as lovers.

17 Epigrams 7.30

You grant your favours to Parthians, you grant them to Germans, you grant them, Caelia, to Dacians, and you do not spurn the couch of Cilicians and Cappadocians; and for you from his Egyptian city comes sailing the gallant (poker: Ker 1968) of Memphis, and the black Indian from the Red Sea; nor do you shun the lecheries (groin: Ker, 1968) of circumcised Jews, and the Alan on his Sarmatian steed does not pass you by. What is your reason that, although you are a Roman girl, no Roman lewdness (prick: Ker, 1968) has attraction for you? (LCL)

This points to Jews as being successful where Martial has not even been invited. He abuses the Roman woman who does not regard Roman men as equivalent in appeal to these exotic outsiders. The woman Caelia becomes the target of his rhetoric, because she can give a particular favour to men whom he would exclude from the competition.

Extract 18⁸⁹ has caused a great deal of confusion in the minds of commentators, Leon, Stern and Gager all stating that the epigram refers to a circumcised Jew among Martial’s slaves.⁹⁰

18 Epigrams 7.35

A slave, girt around the groin with a black covering of dressed leather, waits on you while you are being caressed all over by

⁸⁸ Martial, *Epigrams* 7.30.

⁸⁹ Martial, *Epigrams* 7.35.

⁹⁰ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 39; Stern, *Authors*, I, p. 525; Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 56.

warm water. But my slave, to say nothing of myself, has a Jewish load beneath bare skin; but bare are the young men and old men who wash themselves in your company. Is your slave's prick the only true one? Do you, O matron, follow at all after feminine recesses, and do you, O lower end, wash yourself secretly in water of your own? (LCL)

As may be seen from the translation in the most recent Loeb edition, Martial does not have a Jewish slave, but addresses in satirical vein a woman who has a slave who is as well-hung as a Jew, and he arrogates the same attribute to himself as well.

Martial's remark smacks more of sexual jealousy than 'ridicule of Jews' as Leon has it.⁹¹ And in Extract 19,⁹² Martial again hints at Jews being well endowed sexually. This kind of remark is hardly ever an insult when penned by a male author.

19 Epigrams 7.82

Menophilus' person (penis: Ker 1968) a sheath (brace: Ker 1968) covers so enormous that it alone would be sufficient for the whole tribe of comic actors. This fellow I had imagined—for we often bathe together—was solicitous to spare his voice; but while he was exercising himself in the view of the people in the middle of the exercise ground, the sheath unluckily fell off: lo, he was circumcised. (LCL)

In Extract 20,⁹³ Martial is in an exquisite frenzy of jealousy and sour grapes over a Jewish poet, who is a strong and successful rival, but not alas only in poetry, also in the matter of Martial's favourite boy.

⁹¹ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, index entry for Martial, p. 372.

⁹² Martial, *Epigrams* 7.82.

⁹³ Martial, *Epigrams* 11.94.

20 Epigrams 11.94

Your overflowing malice, and your detraction everywhere of my books, I pardon: circumcised poet, you are wise. This, too, I disregard, that when you carp at my poems you plunder them: so, too, circumcised poet, you are wise. What tortures me is this, that you, circumcised poet, although born in the very midst of Solyma (Jerusalem: Ker 1968), outrage my boy. There! you deny it, and swear to me by the Thunderer's Temple. I don't believe you: swear circumcised one, by Anchialus. (LCL)

This Jew strikes Martial too close to home for him to ridicule him dispassionately. He is really stung by the Jewish poet's success, and uses the most visually explicit word, of the four possible in Latin, to describe the poet's circumcised state.⁹⁴

Less close to Martial's pride and his person is the Jew described in Extract 21,⁹⁵ a beggar taught to be such from his mother's knee, a Jew of quite a different social class and background from the 'circumcised poet' of Extract 20, and just one in the list of noisy nuisances of the Roman streets.

⁹⁴ The word used is *verpus* which describes the colour and condition of the glans penis as opposed to *recutitus*, *curtus* or *circumcिसus* which reflect the circumcision process. All the Latin words for 'circumcised' except 'circumcिसus' are regarded by Smith in his dictionary as having a scornful connotation, and these are the words used by Horace, Martial and Juvenal. Readers of that particular dictionary will be likely to understand these words as scornful, a connotation that is not mentioned in the dictionaries of Lewis and Short or Glare. This attribution of scorn, which could well have arisen by means of a circular argument based on translators' own opinions as to the Roman writers' evaluations of Jews, is likely to be accepted and incorporated into the reader's understanding of Horace, Martial and Juvenal; but its basis is an interpretation, not a translation.

⁹⁵ Martial, *Epigrams* 12.57.7-14.

21 Epigrams 12.57.7-14

On this side the money-changer idly rattles on his dirty table
 Nero's coins, on that the hammerer of Spanish gold-dust beats
 his well-worn stone with burnished mallet; and Bellona's raving
 throng does not rest, nor the canting ship-wrecked seaman with
 his swathed body, nor the Jew taught by his mother to beg, nor
 the bleary-eyed huckster of sulphur-wares. (LCL)

Gager characterises Martial, along with Juvenal, Quintilian, Pliny the Younger and Tacitus, as belonging to 'a closed circle of like-minded spirits bent on defending "the old ways"'.⁹⁶ Gager feels that their writing bears the stamp of xenophobia which in turn gives rise to anti-semitism. Simon believes that Graeco-Roman anti-Semitism arose out of the separatism occasioned by the Jews' religion and had nothing to do with 'race', a notion 'quite foreign to the ancient way of thinking'.⁹⁷ Grant goes further and says that Martial 'delivers himself of a variety of sneers' fed by the feelings of 'suspicion and dislike' of Jews,⁹⁸ and 'sneer' was also the word Grant used to describe the attitude of Seneca and Petronius to Jews. Bacchiocchi, with similar views to Grant, opines that Martial thinks that the 'circumcised Jews and their Sabbath are a synonym of degradation'.⁹⁹

I disagree. I feel the negativity expressed towards Jews by Martial is not nearly on such a grand scale. It is petty and domestic, to do with amours and vanity. Martial finds Jews to be treading on his toes socially, yet useful butts for his humour. He is able to make his

⁹⁶ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 65.

⁹⁷ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 202; see also the section from pp. 202 to 207.

⁹⁸ Grant, *The Jews*, p. 222.

⁹⁹ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 175.

audiences laugh with what he says about Jews. His caricatures are near enough to the mark to be funny, a well-worn way of releasing tension when another social group threatens one's own privileges. His belief that Jews were great lovers seems to be a dominant thread in what he thinks of them; so in all important matters Jews stood very close to Martial, ready almost to step into his shoes. In Martial's perception some Jews were genuine rivals.

Epictetus wrote in Greek at the end of the first century or beginning of the second, and, in Extract 22,¹⁰⁰ describes a Jew as finally having made up his mind and been 'baptised'.

22 Preserved in Arrian, Dissertations 2.9.19-21

Sit down now and give a philosophical discourse upon the principles of Epicurus, and perhaps you will discourse more effectively than Epicurus himself. Why then do you call yourself a Stoic, why do you deceive the multitude, why do you act the part of a Jew, when you are a Greek? Do you not see in what sense men are severally called Jew, Syrian, or Egyptian? For example, whenever we see a man halting between two faiths, we are in the habit of saying, 'He is not a Jew, he is only acting the part'. But when he adopts the attitude of mind of the man who has been baptised and has made his choice, then he both is a Jew in fact and is also called one. So we also are counterfeit 'Baptists', ostensibly Jews, but in reality something else, not in sympathy with our own reason, far from applying the principles which we profess, yet priding ourselves upon them as being men who know them. (LCL)

It is not quite clear to what he is referring, for he speaks of someone who 'takes up the commitment of one who has been

¹⁰⁰ Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.9.19-21.

immersed and won over'.¹⁰¹ Commentators are divided as to whether the person is being baptised in some way into Judaism, or whether Epictetus does not properly distinguish between Christians and Jews.¹⁰² Scholars generally have beliefs about when that distinction became plain, and consider it to be earlier than the writings of Epictetus.¹⁰³ I do not accept that the differentiation took place early on, so do not find the confusion at all surprising. I believe the groups of Christians and Jews were not separated or distinguished completely till much later than the time of Epictetus. For John Chrysostom, for example in fourth-century Antioch, was still urging his Christian congregation to give up attending the synagogue there.

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Plutarch, writing literary and theological works in Greek at the end of the first century,¹⁰⁵ is a man for whom 'moral concern and learning go hand in hand'.¹⁰⁶ And Russell also remarks that in spite of being 'formal and pedantic' Plutarch reveals 'vast reading and sometimes a shrewd philosophical or anthropological judgment'.¹⁰⁷ That Plutarch's religious practices, as a priest at Delphi, were, in his own perception anyway, much more serious and pious than Judaism, is suggested by Russell when he concludes that Plutarch 'belongs to the continuous tradition of Hellenic piety and Hellenic

¹⁰¹ My translation of: ὅταν δ' ἀναλάβῃ τὸ πάθος τὸ τοῦ βεβαμμένου καὶ ἡρημένου.

¹⁰² Long, *Epictetus*, p. 126.

¹⁰³ Stern, *Authors*, I, p. 543.

¹⁰⁴ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 118-19; Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 326-27, and *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch, *Questions; Superstition*.

¹⁰⁶ Russell, *Plutarch*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁷ Russell, *Plutarch*, p. 83.

scepticism, not much affected by the great changes in religious feeling which he could sense in the world around'.¹⁰⁸ But Grant sees in Plutarch's writings a malign intention, more inimical than merely a state of blinkered complacency and self-satisfaction, and groups him with writers he regards as hostile to Jews.¹⁰⁹

Certainly, as Plutarch writes from a position of strong bias towards all things Hellenic, he does ride somewhat roughshod over Jewish sensibilities and Jewish aspirations to be taken seriously as a religion when he lists some follies of superstition in Extract 23.

23 De Superstitione 3, p. 166A

... because of superstition, such as smearing with mud, wallowing in filth, keeping of the Sabbath*, casting oneself down with face to the ground, disgraceful besieging of the gods, and uncouth prostrations. (LCL altered by Stern)

* 'immersions' in LCL, following the emendation of Bentley.

And it is a bit hard to understand how keeping the sabbath can fit into that list in any logical way, as the others all refer to deep or extreme body movements and involve contact with mud or other semi-solid substance. And there is no evidence that Jews were believed to do any of those things on the sabbath. This is perhaps the reason that in translating this text Stern follows the French edition of Defradas, against Babbitt in the Loeb series, which rejects the emendation of

¹⁰⁸ Russell, *Plutarch*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁹ Grant, *The Jews*, p. 240; see above text at note 41; see also Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 175.

Bentley¹¹⁰ which would replace 'keeping of the Sabbath' with 'immersions'. One can certainly see how the image of 'immersions' would fit better into Plutarch's sequence.

Nonetheless, neither the original, nor the emended text, makes the idea in Plutarch's mind any easier to grasp. Goldenberg has rightly commented, 'When Plutarch or the Roman poets speak of the Sabbath, one cannot know precisely what they had in mind' ¹¹¹

Plutarch is, however, one of the few Graeco-Roman writers to mention the taking of wine on sabbath; Persius merely described the flask full of wine, visible through the window of Jewish homes on Friday evenings, but Plutarch describes its consumption as proving a connection with the cult of Dionysus. But, the information Plutarch gives is far from clear, for the Greek of the comment¹¹² is amenable to quite different translations.

24 Quaestiones Conviviales 4.6.2

I think that the sabbath festival too is not entirely without a Dionysiac element ... They themselves attest the theory, for whenever they celebrate sabbaths they challenge one another to drinking and drunkenness and, when some more important business prevents this, they make a habit of tasting at least a little neat wine. (Whittaker)

I believe that even the feast of the Sabbath is not completely unrelated to Dionysius ... The Jews themselves testify to a connection with Dionysius when they keep the Sabbath by

¹¹⁰ Bentley read βαπτισμούς for σαββατισμούς; see also the occurrences of σαββατισμός elsewhere denoting 'the observance or celebration of the Sabbath', in Lincoln, 'Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology', p. 213.

¹¹¹ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 429.

¹¹² ὅταν σάββατα τελῶσι, μάλιστα μὲν πίνειν καὶ οἰνοῦσθαι παρακαλοῦντες ἀλλήλους, ὅταν δὲ κωλύῃ τι μῆζον ἀπογεύεσθαι γε πάντως ἀκράτου νομίζοντες.

inviting each other to drink and enjoy wine; when more important business interferes with this custom, they regularly take at least a little sip of neat wine. (LCL: Hoffleit)

Whittaker translates in a way that denigrates the wine-drinking as drunkenness, and Hoffleit regards it as enjoying wine. One comment is offensive and the other sympathetic. Which is Plutarch's? Goldenberg is quite certain in his mind for he states that Plutarch compares the sabbath to 'a bacchanalian orgy, at which the participants ply each other with wine until they are drunk'.¹¹³ And the translation of Defradas follows the same idea by saying 'puisqu'ils s'exhortent avant tout les uns les autres à boire et à s'enivrer'.¹¹⁴

The interpretations depend on the assumptions of the translators, both about the Jews' use of wine, and about the Roman authors' perceptions of Jews as temperate or not. There is no way of resolving the problem unless an equally ambiguous expression in English could be found to express the amount and mood of the wine consumption on the sabbath.

Tacitus, at the end of the first century CE, writes rather sharply about Jews.¹¹⁵ Grant speaks in extravagant terms of Tacitus's animus against the Jews, saying that 'he had treated them to an elaborate but hostile and misleading account'.¹¹⁶ I find it hard to accept that Tacitus maltreated the Jews by what he wrote. As will become evident, Tacitus gives a fairly accurate description of the

¹¹³ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', pp. 435-36.

¹¹⁴ Defradas, *Plutarque IX*, p. 43: 'because, above all, they encourage each other to drink and to become drunk'.

¹¹⁵ Tacitus, *Histories* 5.4.3-5.5.

¹¹⁶ Grant, *The Jews*, pp. 240-41; see also Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, pp. 175-76.

behaviour and attitudes of Jews. Grant is overreacting to perceived insults to Jews.

25 Histories 5.4.3-5.5

4.3 By frequent fasts even now they bear witness to the long hunger with which they were once distressed, and the unleavened Jewish bread is still employed in memory of the haste with which they seized the grain. They say that they first chose to rest on the seventh day because that day ended their toils; but after a time they were led by the charms of indolence to give over the seventh year as well to inactivity. Others say that this is done in honour of Saturn, whether it be that the primitive elements of their religion were given by the Idaeans, who, according to tradition, were expelled with Saturn and became the founders of the Jewish race, or is due to the fact that, of the seven planets that rule the fortunes of mankind, Saturn moves in the highest orbit and has the greatest potency; and that many of the heavenly bodies traverse their paths and courses in multiples of seven.

5.1 Whatever their origin, these rites are maintained by their antiquity; the other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity; for the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributing to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews; again the Jews are extremely loyal to one another, and always ready to show compassion, but towards every other people they feel only hate and enmity. 5.2 They sit apart at meals and they sleep apart, and although as a race, they are prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women; yet among themselves nothing is unlawful. They adopted circumcision to distinguish themselves from other peoples by this difference. Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice, and the earliest lesson they receive is to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account. 5.3 However, they take thought to increase their

numbers; for they regard it as a crime to kill any late-born child, and they believe that the souls of those who are killed in battle or by the executioner are immortal: hence comes their passion for begetting children, and their scorn of death ... 5.4 ... the Jews conceive of one god only, and that with the mind only ...

Therefore they set up no statues in their cities, still less in their temples; this flattery is not paid their kings, nor this honour given to the Caesars. 5.5 But since their priests used to chant to the accompaniment of pipes and drums and to wear garlands of ivy, and because a golden vine was found in their temple, some have thought that they were devotees of Father Liber, the conqueror of the East, in spite of the incongruity of their customs. For Liber established festive rites of a joyous nature, while the ways of the Jews are preposterous and mean. (LCL)

In Extract 25, the standard translations of section 5.5.1 require the understanding of several words or referents that are not present in the text. The key phrase is 'Nam pessimus quisque spretis religionibus patriis tributa et stipes illuc <con>gerebant, unde auctae Iudaeorum res ...'.¹¹⁷ Moore and Church & Brodribb regard the 'pessimus' as a person or persons of other races (not Roman or Jewish) who has given up the religion of those races in order to send money to Jerusalem. They regard this phrase as evidence of successful Jewish proselytism in Rome.¹¹⁸

But that this passage refers to 'other races' is not clearly defined by the words of the text, and requires the introduction of extraneous ideas to the matter being discussed. The text could equally mean that the Jews are the worst of people, because they have renounced 'the

¹¹⁷ See also fuller Latin text in the Appendix of Texts for Chapter 5.

¹¹⁸ Jewish proselytising is more clearly indicated in 5.2, which points to noticeable numbers of men being willing to accept circumcision as their entry into the Jewish faith.

ancestral religions' (i.e. the Roman worship of the gods and goddesses of the pantheon) and are instead sending money to support Judaism in Jerusalem, which means out of Roman coffers.

If this is a fairer translation and fairer interpretation, then Tacitus is quite right to say that Jews have abandoned 'the ancestral religions' in that they followed Jewish monotheism with their own traditions and laws. His understanding of Jewish resolution is faultless as can be seen from his analysis in 5.4 of why the Jews do not set up statues to important public figures in their cities or 'temples',¹¹⁹ and shows a deep appreciation of how determined the Jews were not to be moved from the precepts of their faith.

But taking the whole of Tacitus's report of the Jews and setting on one side the xenophobia and unquestioning belief in the superiority of all things Roman, yields the following description of Jews: they always send money to Jerusalem, they are loyal to each other, always ready to show compassion to each other, but keep apart from other people for sitting, sleeping and eating. They are lusty but keep to Jewish women. They are circumcised. Their converts reject the Roman pantheon and put God before their non-Jewish relatives. Jews do not kill infants or procure abortions, and even enjoy having children.¹²⁰ They will not make statues of public figures either to adorn their cities or 'temples' or to honour secular rulers. They celebrated in the past in their temple with singing, music and

¹¹⁹ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 40, assumes that the word 'temples' means 'synagogues'. Perhaps 'prayer-houses' would be a better substitution.

¹²⁰ Cf. the similar description of Jewish views and practice on these matters in Josephus, *Apion* 2.198-203.

garlands of ivy, but they are not joyful in religion, rather unusual and non-lavish.

Most of this is quite accurate and faithful to the Jewish way of life. Jewish religious festivals were indeed likely to be sober affairs by Roman standards. Also Jews did not wish to become assimilated into Roman society and that the Romans regarded as enmity. Tacitus lists the same features of Jewishness that are familiar to us from other writers, e.g. Josephus. But it is interesting that in all his account of Jews Tacitus says nothing about distinctive Jewish behaviour or worship on the sabbath.

Juvenal, younger than Martial by about fifteen years, yet his friend, wrote satires in a similar, powerful vein.¹²¹ He shows a 'nightmare obsession with poverty and degradation' in his earlier satires which contain 'lethal invective'.¹²² He avoids direct obscenity in his comments about Roman life, but, as Highet puts it, can turn one's stomach in three words.¹²³ Yet he more often shows wryness about his place in the social life of the city, and adopts the voice of his friend, or possibly his own poetic persona, Umbricius,¹²⁴ when he describes the 'squalid and humiliating life of a déclassé hanger-on',¹²⁵ who lives by scrounging meals at rich men's homes.

Leon describes Juvenal as using 'bitter invective' in his remarks about Jews,¹²⁶ and Grant considers him one of a group of writers who

¹²¹ Juvenal, *Satires*.

¹²² Green, *Sixteen Satires*, p. 13.

¹²³ Highet, *Juvenal*, p. 215.

¹²⁴ Highet, *Juvenal*, pp. 68-69, n. 254.

¹²⁵ Green, *Sixteen Satires*, p. 22.

¹²⁶ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 41.

made literary mileage from attacks on Jews,¹²⁷ but I find him no more negative about Jews than about many other groups, and occasionally he is more brutal about Romans than about Jews, as for instance when he speaks of a man who 'has first defrauded his ward, and later [d]ebauched the boy as well'.¹²⁸ Jews are never accused of behaviour of that sort either by Juvenal or by any of the Roman writers.

In Extract 26, Juvenal, declaiming against the difficulties of making a reasonable living in Rome, describes the groups of Jewish beggars in the grove at the Porta Capena, near the main gate to the Circus Maximus.

26 Saturae 3.12-16

Here Numa held his nightly assignations with his mistress; but now the holy fount and grove and shrine are let out to Jews, who possess a basket and a truss of hay for all their furnishings. For as every tree nowadays has to pay toll to the people, the Muses have been ejected, and the wood has to go a-begging. (LCL)

The Jews lived in the open, having only the minimum of belongings and being ready to beg or hawk among the crowds attending events at the city's main stadium.

Green translates this section as 'But today Egeria's grove and shrine and sacred spring are rented to Jewish squatters, their sole possession a Sabbath haybox'.¹²⁹ There is a measure of interpretation there, as the Jews are called 'squatters', emphasising their poverty, and their truss of hay becomes a way of keeping food warm for their

¹²⁷ Grant, *The Jews*, p. 240; see also Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 175.

¹²⁸ Green, *Sixteen Satires*, p. 66.

¹²⁹ Green, *Sixteen Satires*, p. 87.

sabbath meal. But the word 'sabbath' is not present in the Latin text, and this translation is, therefore, an interpretation.

All through Satire 3, Juvenal catalogues the petty economies and indignities of people like himself, the out-at-elbow and the shabby genteel, making do with little and pretending to others that it is sufficient and acceptable. So, in Extract 27, from later in Satire 3, he speaks of the hazards of walking home through the city at night: waggons thundering past, the jostling by a litter carrying a wealthy parvenu, falling tiles or rubbish, and a thwarted bully-boy, balked of richer prey, who vents his spleen by insulting Umbricius.

27 Satires 3.292-96

'Where are you from?' shouts he; 'whose vinegar, whose beans have blown you out? With what cobbler have you been munching cut leeks and boiled wether's chaps?—What sirrah, no answer? Speak out, or take that upon your shins. Say, where is your stand? In what prayer-house shall I find you?' (LCL)

What commentators do not notice is that this bully boy *mistakes* the speaker, Umbricius, for a Jew, by suggesting that he could be found in a *proseucha*.¹³⁰ Courtney thinks that Umbricius, who loathes immigrants, would be insulted to be accused of begging at a *proseucha*.¹³¹ If suggesting he is a beggar is an insult to the Roman male, surely, from that perspective, it would be more of an insult to accuse him of being a Jew. And if that is what is happening in this interchange, as I believe to be the case, then the earlier part of what is

¹³⁰ Here I use the Latin word *proseucha* for the meeting-house or prayer-house of the Jews, reserving the word 'synagogue' for the congregation of Jews, as previously discussed in Chapter 4; see also Stern, discussion on Artemidorus, *Authors*, II, p. 330.

¹³¹ Courtney, *Juvenal*, pp. 191-92.

said also refers to this hypothetical Jew that Umbricius [or Juvenal] is mistaken for.

And so something more is discovered about Roman 'knowledge' of Jews. Jews drink vinegar, or perhaps cheap wine mixed with water, eat beans and boiled sheep's heads with onions. This would indeed be kosher food. They have convivial evenings with their cronies, for example a cobbler. This could have some connection with the wine-drinking mentioned in Plutarch. They may safely be threatened with a kicking as they go home carrying one little candle. And they smell unpleasant or noticeable because of what they eat. This is similar to the point made by Martial about Jewish women.

I cannot agree with Courtney that Juvenal expresses anti-Jewish feeling. If he did, how could he possibly write of being mistaken for a Jew, without some immediate denial of that allegiance from Umbricius, rather than his description of how painfully impossible it was to either answer the bully's taunts or escape in silence. He writes as if he has regularly had to accept the insults that would also have been meted out to Jews, for he was in many ways their like, eking out his existence on the margins of society, not poor but of the 'rootless middle-class'.¹³² And these would be the people who could be found inside or hanging about outside a prayer-house.

Juvenal paints a mosaic picture of the Jews he knew as being, in many ways, like himself, although they were not Romans and had no roots in the city's social structures. They would hang about their *proseucha*, rather than the Forum.

¹³² Highet, *Juvenal*, p. 68.

Extract 28 is a piece of 'the gigantic and virulent Sixth Satire directed against women',¹³³ in which Juvenal makes fun of the Roman matron who is swayed and controlled by the whims of superstitious religious practices. And he also makes fun of the aged Jewess who offers to tell dreams for a small coin.

28 Satires 6.542-47

No sooner has that fellow departed than a palsied Jewess, leaving her basket and her truss of hay, comes begging to her secret ear; she is an interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem, a high priestess of the tree, a trusty go-between of highest heaven. She, too, fills her palm, but more sparingly, for a Jew will tell you dreams of any kind you please for the minutest of coins. (LCL)

Considering how nasty Juvenal is about Roman women in this and other satires, he describes the Jewish woman in quite a gentle way, merely as palsied and begging, descriptive rather than pejorative terms. For elsewhere in this satire he reviles many Roman women for all sorts of lewdness and vulgarity, and also one for murdering her own children at the meal table.¹³⁴ His remarks on the Jewish woman are mild and delicate by comparison.

Satire 8 describes all that is wrong with social life in Rome, and in it Juvenal tells of the low life indulged in by men who should be above such things and paints a thumb nail sketch of an all-night tavern, run by a Jew. The bar-maid rushes to offer her wine bottle, and Green's translation gives more than a hint of venery as well on offer. Here again we find the linking of Jews and lust.

¹³³ Green, *Sixteen Satires*, p. 12.

¹³⁴ Green, *Sixteen Satires*, pp. 129-141, 151.

29 Satires 8. 158-62

And when it pleases him to go back to the all-night tavern, a Syro-Phoenician runs forth to meet him—a denizen of the Idumaeen gate perpetually drenched in perfumes—and salutes him as lord and prince with all the airs of a host; and with him comes Cyane, her dress tucked up, carrying a flagon of wine for sale. (LCL)

Green 182-83

At the all-night taverns; when he shows up, mine host—
Some greasy Syrian from the Jewish quarter, with slicked-back,
Pomadened hair—runs out, greets him obsequiously,
Calls him ‘M’lord’ and ‘Your Honour’, while the barmaid gives
A hitch to her skirts, and uncorks her bottle for action.

Satire 14 attacks avarice and parental influence, and in
Extract 30 Juvenal uses a Jewish stock character to kick at.

30 Satires 14.96-106

Some who have had a father who reveres the Sabbath, worship nothing but the clouds and the divinity of the heavens, and see no difference between eating swine’s flesh, and that of a man; and in time they take to circumcision. Having been wont to flout the laws of Rome, they learn and practice and revere the Jewish law, and all that Moses handed down in his secret tome, forbidding to point out the way to any not worshipping the same rites, and conducting none but the circumcised to the desired fountain. For all which the father was to blame, who gave up every seventh day to idleness, keeping it apart from all the concerns of life. (LCL)

Simon makes an interesting analysis of this extract, finding in it evidence of frequent instances of Roman conversions to Judaism in the time between the two Jewish wars.¹³⁵ Roman fathers are

¹³⁵ Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 280-82, 285, 375.

described as being on the fringes of Judaism, accepting monotheism, keeping the sabbath and avoiding pork, with their sons taking matters further, being converted and accepting circumcision. Simon regards this description of Juvenal's as a vehement denunciation of the Jews and their increasing grip on Roman society, and records it as another example of Juvenal's spitefulness towards Jews. But it is difficult to see where the spitefulness occurs in this text.

A similar reaction to this text comes from Goldenberg, who claims that Juvenal 'attributed the growing number of non-Jewish Sabbath-observers to their laziness, as though the Sabbath gave them an excuse to pass every seventh day without having to give any attention to life's serious concerns'.¹³⁶ Goldenberg's comments combine maximisation both of the number of Jewish proselytes and of the insult expressed towards the Jews, both points he is at pains to make. But the text seems to me to tease rather than insult, particularly in the way the ban on eating pork is expressed.

However, a comparison of Extract 30 with Extract 14, the fragment of Petronius, shows that both texts have almost parallel content and perspective about Jews. Both list the numen of heaven, pork avoidance, circumcision, keeping the sabbath and the law. The writers share a negative evaluation of the Jews' enclave mentality and sabbath prohibitions. This reads like a standard package describing Jews. And again we find that no activities special to sabbath are described.

Juvenal has been, in my view, much maligned for his bitter treatment of Jews. He was hard on all sorts and conditions of people,

¹³⁶ Goldenberg, 'Jewish Sabbath', p. 430.

and did not single out the Jews for insult. I find that he is often kinder in his descriptions of Jews than of fellow Romans—as Martial was not—and that he has experienced the oppression undergone by Jews at the hands of bully-boys and felt it as a parallel victim himself.

So from Martial and Juvenal we learn that Jews were rather too significant on the Roman scene. And although we learn nothing more about their sabbath practice, the building *proseucha* is mentioned for the first time, as a place where Jews congregated.

Suetonius adds little to the picture of the sabbath, reporting only that Augustus claimed that he fasted as scrupulously as, by his way of it, Jews did on the sabbath.¹³⁷

31 The Deified Augustus 76.2

Once more: ‘Not even a Jew, my dear Tiberius, fasts so scrupulously on his sabbaths as I have today; for it was not until after the first hour of the night that I ate two mouthfuls of bread in the bath before I began to be anointed.’ (LCL)

But from other references to Augustus’s eating habits,¹³⁸ and his care to eat in private and toy with food in public, we may conclude that this text refers to the Emperor’s practice of making the public image of fastidiousness over food his main concern, rather than to a religious attitude.

¹³⁷ Suetonius, *Lives*, pp. 240-41.

¹³⁸ Suetonius, *Lives*, pp. 240-43.

GREEK WRITERS

The last four authors to be studied, seem to have a different set of interactions with Jews. The heat in the debate has cooled, and Jews seem to be strangers again rather than near or would-be intimates and rivals. The writings are in Greek and the details they supply are about the discussions in groups of Jews and about their gathering in their προσευχαί.

Extract 32 from **Cleomedes** (writing in Greek, dates uncertain) is somewhat difficult to unravel, but he is deriding the florid over-elaborated style of discourse that he associates with Epicurus, brothel inmates, women at the Thesmophoria festivals and Jewish beggars in the courtyards of προσευχαί.¹³⁹

32 De motu circulari 2.1.91

Since, in addition to other things, his style [scil. Epicurus] is also a corrupt motley, making use of expressions like ‘stable states of the flesh’ and ‘hopeful hopes’ concerning it, and calling tears ‘glistenings of the eyes’ and having recourse to phrases like ‘holy screechings’ and ‘ticklings of the body’ and ‘wenchings’ and other bad mischiefs of this kind. One may say that these expressions derive in part from brothels, in part they are similar to those spoken by women celebrating the Thesmophoria at the festivals of Demeter, and in part they issue from the midst of the synagogue (προσευχή) and the beggars in its courtyards. These are Jewish and debased and much lower than reptiles. (Stern)

Cleomedes tells us three things about Jews. They speak in flowery, and possibly noisy, circumlocutions, they gather in buildings called προσευχαί, which are large enough to have courtyards, and they are or can be beggars. This points to a more flourishing Jewish

¹³⁹ Stern, *Authors*, II, pp. 157-58; see also Cleomedes, *De motu* (tr. R. Goulet), p. 150.

community and an image of Jews as having particular speech patterns.

In Extract 33, **Apuleius** describes a woman who has rejected the Roman gods in favour of one single god, although he says that she also consumed alcoholic drink in large quantities and pursued lechery.¹⁴⁰

33 **Metamorphoses 9.14**

Furthermore she scorned and spurned all the gods in heaven, and, instead of holding a definite faith, she used the false sacrilegious presumption of a god, whom she would call 'one and only', to invent meaningless rites to cheat everyone and deceive her wretched husband, having sold her body to drink from dawn and to debauchery the whole day. (LCL)

The Latin of the phrase 'whom she calls the one and only' (*quem praedicaret unicum*) can be translated in such a way as to indicate that the woman would declaim to this one and only god. Could this be a reference to the opening line of the Shema, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one'? It is possible. Certainly, commentators agree that Christianity or Judaism is implied in this passage, although only a very garbled description of either religion can be extracted from the passage.

Galen, in Extract 34,¹⁴¹ from one of his medical works written in Greek during the latter part of the second century, contrasts a proper

¹⁴⁰ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 2, 9.14.

¹⁴¹ Galen, *De pulsuum* 2.4.

way of discussing and proving a thesis with the way he finds in the 'school of Moses and Christ'.

34 De pulsuum differentiis 2.4

Thus one would not, at the very start, as if one had come into the school of Moses and Christ, hear about laws that have not been demonstrated, and concerning a matter where it is least appropriate. (Walzer in Stern)

This is reminiscent of Horace's view of Jews as credulous (Extract 4). Most commentators see here a reference to the two religious groups of Jews and Christians, but I see rather a description of, either the as yet undifferentiated group of Christians and Jews, or the group of Jews who followed Christ, namely the early Christians.

Extract 35 is similar,¹⁴² but can read either way as referring to either one or two groups of thinkers and talkers. It is another very interesting hint that Jews and Christians were not separated, either in fact, or in the popular perception of them as a religious group, until later than has usually been suggested.

35 De Pulsuum Differentiis 3.3

One might more easily teach novelties to the followers of Moses and Christ than to the physicians and philosophers, who cling fast to their schools. So that in the end I determined to spare myself much idle talk by not discussing anything at all with them. (Walzer in Stern)

In **Artemidorus'** Greek work on the interpretation of dreams, the paragraph on προσευχαί is sandwiched between one on dunghills

¹⁴² Galen, *De pulsuum* 3.3.

and one on keys.¹⁴³ Arranging the paragraphs like that does suggest some sort of unflattering connection between dunghills and the Jewish place of assembly. But the section on keys is quite neutral in character, so perhaps the arrangement of paragraphs is nothing worse than random.

He does, however, associate dreaming of προσευχαί with images of beggars and misery of various description. He has nothing good to say about προσευχαί.

36 Oneirocritica 53

A synagogue [προσευχή] and beggars and all people who ask for gifts, and as such arouse pity, and mendicants, foretell grief, anxiety and heartache to both men and women. For on the one hand, no one departs for a synagogue [προσευχή] without a care, and, on the other, beggars who are very odious looking and without resources and have nothing wholesome about them are an obstacle to every plan. (Stern)

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE WRITINGS CE

In this Chapter I have presented all the information I could trace about the perception of Jews by Graeco-Roman authors. The inclusion of this enormous quantity of background has been necessary to set what the Romans say about Jews in perspective. The quotations taken either in isolation or out of context can seem more anti-Semitic than they truly are. The Graeco-Roman authors were at

¹⁴³ Stern, *Authors*, II, p. 330; Artemidorus, *Dreams* (tr. R.J. White) pp. 171-72; note the translation 'synagogue' for προσευχή.

times hostile or inimical to Jews, but in many cases less so than they were to other races or even to other Romans.

The Jewish character is seen quite sharply and clearly, from the outside, by acute observers who do not belong to the community of the Jews. Jewish behaviour and institutions are noted and recorded from a stance of otherness. The picture can only show Jews or Jewish meetings from the outside and can include nothing of the motives and emotions of Jews, other than what may be surmised by sensitive and sharp-eyed, though possibly mistaken, writers.

The Roman viewpoint is mostly one of distant superiority. The only exceptions to this are Martial, whose certainty of superiority slips and reveals an envy and dread of being surpassed by a Jew, and Juvenal whose character Umbricius shares many of the snubs and humiliations felt by Jews. In the time when they were writing, these Romans felt a danger of being outshone or outclassed by Jews. They did not attack Jews for their Jewishness, but for their presumption in equalling Romans while absolutely resisting amalgamation and assimilation. But towards the end of the second century CE the Jews and the animus towards them fade to the periphery of the Roman consciousness again.

In the writings of Seneca, the Jewish sabbath is known to involve the lighting of lamps, but there are no clear references to a worship service on the sabbath. It is possible, however, that Seneca did know and disapprove of daily services for morning prayer.¹⁴⁴ He also seems to have been disgruntled about the spread of Jewish customs to other nations, particularly the practice of resting on the sabbath.

¹⁴⁴ As revealed by his desire to 'forbid men to offer morning salutation and to throng the doors of temples' (quoted above in Extract 9).

Persius describes a Jewish sabbath beginning on Friday evening with lamp-lighting and a meal which includes wine and fish. But it is my contention that he also describes a young, ambitious Jew attempting to scale the same ladder to political success as that climbed by other citizens of Rome. Here, then, we can see Jews with enough affluence to elaborate their meals and rituals, and with enough money and status to run their own careers as a parallel version of what the Romans did.

Petronius seems to have described the sabbath in a negative way, as something that oppressed one or made one tremble at its fasting laws. But it is also possible that he describes a happy sabbath of rest which he feels some people were oppressing with a 'hungry' law. But Frontinus, with less partiality, expresses a similar concept from the opposite perspective when he says that the Jews felt it was sinful to do business on the sabbath. The sabbath does not force them to inaction. They feel they should avoid action out of a religious obligation to obey their commandments.

Martial, though often considered to have referred to Jewish fasting on the sabbath, actually only remarks on the body odour of fasting Jewesses, without specifying when they fasted. In the main he regards upwardly mobile Jews as dangerous rivals meriting his sharpest sarcasm, but lower-class Jews he makes fun of in a light-hearted way. Thus we can be aware that there was quite a range of Jewish success in Roman commerce and letters.

The piece from the writings of Epictetus is so problematic that it adds nothing definite to the search for details of sabbath worship, and only opens up another aspect of the later part of the period under

study, namely the aspect of the developing distinction between Christians and Jews.

Plutarch has a confused view of the sabbath of the Jews, but he is aware that they 'keep' it, and that on that day they drink wine.

Tacitus, in my opinion, does not show hatred of the Jews and describes their lifestyle in great detail, getting the measure of their care for their community and of their absolute devotion to God. But, as with all other writers studied, he says nothing about sabbath worship.

Juvenal presents a much more sympathetic view of Jews than that of Martial, especially when, in my view, he tells of being mistaken for a Jew and bullied in much the same way that a Jew would have been bullied. If my understanding of that passage is correct, he also allows his readers to see Jews as comfortably situated, in the lower middle class group of society which is where Juvenal felt his external appearance put him in the eyes of street bullies. These were Jews who were artisans and who followed the Jewish way of life, quite well above subsistence level.

But he also resists the Jews' determination to preserve their way of life and their laws 'untainted', as it were from the Jewish perspective, by Roman customs. So he castigates the Jewish son of a God-fearing¹⁴⁵ father, who keeps the sabbath in idleness, and 'flouts the laws of Rome'. But he makes no mention of how the Jewish divinity of the clouds and the heavens is worshipped, only that he is.

The building *proseucha* is a place big enough to have people gathering at it, or outside it in a courtyard, in the writings of Juvenal,

¹⁴⁵ I have used this word in spite of the difficulties raised about it by Kraabel, in 'Synagoga Caeca' and 'Six Questionable Assumptions', because it implies a person attracted to Judaism, but still on the fringes.

Cleomedes and Artemidorus, at a time not earlier than the last years of the first century CE. This contrasts rather sharply with the fact that Philo speaks of many Roman προσευχαί, when he writes of Rome under Tiberius in the *Embassy to Gaius* about fifty years earlier. But it is possible that Philo, as a Jew, would have more knowledge of private homes, or rooms, used as meeting-houses for prayer since he would have been made welcome there.¹⁴⁶ And it suggests to me that purpose-built προσευχαί appeared on the scene in Rome rather later than has been supposed by most commentators, sometime between 41 CE and the end of the century. But it could be that Philo merely assumed for other cities what he knew for his own.

However, the word consistently used in these texts for the meeting-house of Jews is *proseucha* (Juvenal) and προσευχή (Cleomedes and Artemidorus). The word synagogue is not used at all—*pace* the English translations which give that impression. And the descriptions of the people gathered at the προσευχαί suggest a noisy, chattering, persistent and even obstructive group, who seem to do nothing but irritate and impede the Roman worthy going about his lawful occasions.

The possibility that Galen knew of Christian Jews, or of a mixed group of Christians and Jews in the late second century, points to the necessity of research into the writings of Justin and his contemporaries. Certainly, as we have already noted, John Chrysostom, in fourth century-Antioch, was still urging his Christian congregation to give up attending the synagogue there.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Philo, *Embassy* 152-56.

¹⁴⁷ Gager, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 118-19.

I have included in this chapter all texts with any possible relevance or connection to the subject under study, and many of them have been discussed and then discarded as irrelevant to the argument being pursued. But without setting the complete literary framework of how the Graeco-Roman writers viewed the Jews, it would have been impossible to find their more measured comments and to benefit from the information they yield.

The Jews are painted as a close-knit community, devoted to their god and to the interests of the family and the group. They celebrate their holy day on a Friday evening with the lighting of lamps followed by a meal including fish and wine. They have a meeting-house called a *proseucha*, large enough to warrant a courtyard, at which they can gather. No sabbath gatherings of Jews have caught the attention of any of these authors. There is nothing noticeable about the Jews' behaviour on the sabbath but their idleness.

So, ~~still, so far, I have found nothing in~~^{a ll} these texts to divert me from my working hypothesis that Jews met in buildings that were commonly called προσευχαί. They did not have sabbath worship services—as opposed to meetings to discuss the law and other matters of interest—until it seems after the separation from the Christians and, possibly, after the evolution of Christian worship on Sunday.

6. SABBATH IN THE SYNAGOGUE: NEW TESTAMENT SOURCES

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

The decision to write the chapter on the New Testaments texts following those on the works of Philo, Josephus, and the Graeco-Roman authors was taken for two reasons. First, the relative directness of the discourse in those other texts compared with the extreme complexity of the New Testament materials means that the main concepts relating to Jewish activities in sabbath gatherings have been more easily distinguished and stated before beginning the account of what the New Testament texts contribute.¹ And second, because the time span covered by the writings explored in Chapters 4 and 5 extends, in both directions, beyond that from the time of Jesus to the time of the completion of the gospels, the knowledge gained creates a framework against which the New Testament data can be laid for the purposes of understanding and evaluation.² It is important for this study that the evidence the New Testament can

¹ It has not been possible to react with more than a selection of the vast amount of secondary literature generated by study of the New Testament texts. However, it is worth noting that most commentators do not address the issues raised by this study, accepting in the main the traditional view of the 'synagogues of the Jews' as religious buildings in which weekly worship services were held, following a longstanding pattern of religious observance; see especially the revised edition of Schürer, *History* III, 1, pp. 141-49, and the newly published *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, the sections on 'Sabbath', vol. 5, pp. 852-56, and 'Synagogue', vol. 6, pp. 251-53, where descriptions of 'observance' become equated with the practice of 'worship' without any distinction between the two being drawn.

² The time portrayed in the gospel accounts is here taken to be somewhere between 23 and 36 CE, and the time of writing of the gospels between 65 and 150 CE, with preferred dates for Matthew being 80-100 CE, Mark around 80 CE, Luke-Acts post-90 CE, and John post-85 CE; see also the discussion in Chapter 1. In this study Markan priority will be assumed.

supply be separated from the constructions that are often put upon the data.

Many scholars' comments on the origin of New Testament texts are *imprecise*. The dates of composition and editing are uncertain, and the methods used by them to arrive at datings are imprecise in their very nature.³ The best that can be achieved is a *scholarly consensus about the likely date* for each text, with a wide range of perfectly possible dates before and after that estimate.⁴ And a similar level of imprecision arises when efforts are made to pinpoint the place of origin of each text, the group which produced it, and the feasible readerships or audiences of the early forms of the text. All these are estimates, and as such imprecise.⁵

So insights gained from the study of Jewish practice as recorded outside the New Testament throughout a comparable time span to the New Testament texts, can prove useful in understanding the depiction of the sabbath in, particularly, the gospels and Acts, and in deducing whether the details of these New Testament accounts derive from original reminiscences, or from the Christian editing of the tradition in the light of the various social and religious needs of the developing Christian community.

Sabbath observance as understood by the New Testament writers clearly involved refraining from work and other actions regarded as unnecessary on the sabbath. Sabbath rest is presupposed by several gospel healing stories and also in the Easter story, where the women have to wait till the sabbath is past before they can visit the tomb. Luke

³ Fenton, *Matthew*, p. 11.

⁴ Hill, *Matthew*, pp. 48-50.

⁵ Hill, *Matthew*, pp. 50-55.

specifically mentions sabbath rest as the reason for this inaction.⁶ So sabbath rest, *as a general rule and principle*, is not at issue in the gospel texts, although particular forms of sabbath activity such as healing people or rescuing animals are.

However, studying Jewish sabbath practice as it is presented in the gospels and Acts of necessity involves a study of synagogues,⁷ because apart from the synoptic story of the disciples' pulling ears of grain in a field on a sabbath, Luke's story of Jesus dining with a Pharisee on the evening of the sabbath and John's story of the man healed beside the pool of Bethesda, all other happenings that are reported as having taken place on the sabbath, are set in synagogues. Similarly, although it is not explicitly stated on all occasions, it appears likely that all the happenings reported in the New Testament as having taken place in synagogues took place on sabbaths.

The necessity of dealing with the material on the sabbath and on the synagogues at the same juncture complicates the search for a clear understanding of sabbath practice, for the gospel accounts themselves are both scant and ambiguous and while there are many scholarly understandings of synagogue practice, there are no full contemporary accounts of what actually happened in synagogues—the gatherings or the buildings. The gospels and Acts can yield useful evidence about synagogues, but only after a very careful teasing out of the threads of the texts. This is necessary so that the contributions to

⁶ Matt. 28.1; Mk 15.42; 16.1; Lk. 23.54, 56; Jn 19.31.

⁷ The term 'synagogue' here reflects the New Testament usage of the Greek συναγωγή, and does not necessarily mean a purpose-built religious building for Jews, with the caveat that it may mean that. But the word can also mean only the gathered group of people, or can mean the gathering which is at that moment taking place within a building of the same name.

the biblical accounts of both the narrative world of the gospels and the social world of the authors can be distinguished and appreciated.

THE SABBATH AND THE SYNAGOGUE IN THE SECONDARY LITERATURE

Typical of textbook claims about synagogues is the statement that 'the synagogue was certainly a well-developed institution by the first century when they were located throughout Palestine and the Diaspora'.⁸ Such a sweeping statement cannot be supported from either literary or epigraphic evidence.⁹ Nor can the description of the synagogue as providing 'the locus for the teaching of Jesus and later his apostles and so the place of recruitment of the earliest Christian converts and many aspects of the worship and organization of the early church'.¹⁰ This very superficial summary of the situation contains a miasma of misinformation, for the writer has cobbled together data from all sorts of sources, places, dates and types of literary material, giving all equal weight, and making no distinctions between all the various types of highly-coloured propangandist writings. He takes the gospel accounts and their interpretations by the evangelists as hard facts or, possibly, journalistic reporting, making no concessions to the changes in literary practice between the first century and now.¹¹

A similarly uncritical re-telling of the biblical and related data can be found in Spier's recent appraisal of Jesus and the sabbath,¹² where he assumes that the three synoptic evangelists tell severally

⁸ Ferguson, *Early Christianity*, pp. 456-57.

⁹ See discussion in Chapter 9.

¹⁰ Ferguson, *Early Christianity*, p. 457.

¹¹ See the discussion of this point in Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, p. 165-66.

¹² Spier, *Sabbat*, pp. 25-26.

the same account of Jesus' authentic sabbath practice. He reveals his belief in the historical exactness of the gospel accounts of Jesus sabbath activities by devoting the next section of his chapter on the Second Temple to the Diaspora, indicating that he believes both Philo and Josephus to be chronologically later witnesses than the gospels. He then proceeds to harmonise the evidence from Josephus and Philo into a picture of 'synagogues' in the first century, and thereafter rehearses the traditional, negative views of selected Roman writers' opinions of the sabbath.¹³

All such commentators write as if a great deal of knowledge about synagogues and sabbath worship in them may safely be assumed without argumentation.¹⁴ Then they work with that 'knowledge' as a datum. But these over-simplifications do damage to the material surveyed and lead to misrepresentation of what the writers set out to make clear.

Also the unqualified use of the word 'synagogue' avoids the necessity of making clear what is meant each time the word is used. Thus 'synagogue' could mean a free-standing, purpose-built structure which had always been intended for use as a religious meeting-house of Jews. Or it could mean a room in a house set aside for this purpose on the sabbath.¹⁵ Or it could mean a group of people

¹³ Spier, *Sabbat*, pp. 27-29; these negative views attributed to Romans have already been discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁴ Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, II, pp. 32-34; Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 9, 407-408; Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, p. 223, has a particularly sentimental view of Jesus' return to morning worship in the synagogue in his home town; see also the assumption of Brooten, *Women Leaders*, pp. 139-40, that New Testament texts state that women attended synagogue worship services; and even the meticulous Sanders, *Jewish Law*, pp. 77, 78, assumes without argumentation that worship was a recognised activity in first-century CE synagogues in Palestine.

¹⁵ Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, p. 136.

gathered in a shady spot in the open air. But all these possibilities must be kept in mind by the reader, unless each scholar specifies the meaning he or she intends in the particular instance under scrutiny.

Grandiose reconstructions of synagogues and the concomitant descriptions of Jesus' role within them were widely accepted in the past when 'evidence' from the Mishnah was considered relevant to discussions about mid-first-century Palestine.¹⁶ But, generally speaking, evidence from the Mishnah is now regarded as having been edited at a later period, and though containing older material, also having latter day notions retrojected into the past.¹⁷ Thus it is usually treated more cautiously than formerly, as a source for first century CE practice.

THE APPROACH ADOPTED IN THIS CHAPTER

I have, therefore, decided to apply the same methods to these New Testament texts,¹⁸ where possible, that I have applied to the other texts being examined, and begin with what may be found in the texts themselves. Thus occurrences of the key words 'sabbath' and 'synagogue' will be noted, what is said about them, and the types of discourse within which they arise. Differences between these usages among the four gospels and Acts will be assessed as to their relevance to the discussion, and where possible, deductions and inferences will be made from the differences.

¹⁶ Branscomb, *Matthew*, p. 29; also Trocmé, 'Jews', pp. 159-60, assume the same type of service to have taken place in the synagogues that Luke describes Paul as visiting.

¹⁷ Neusner, *Formative Judaism*, pp. 52-53, 63, 109-10, 112-13.

¹⁸ For a complete list of relevant texts see the Appendix of Texts for Chapter 6.

As part of the basis for understanding the religious life of first-century Palestine, the pictures of the sabbath gatherings of Jews gained from Philo, Josephus and the Graeco-Roman writers will be regarded here as equally valid to those gleaned from the New Testament, and as necessary input in the search for a more detailed and accurate picture of those gatherings. Thus from Philo we learn of the Jews gathering to study, listen, learn and discuss, with one of those (males) present taking the opportunity, as it presented itself, to explain the scriptures to the others.¹⁹ And Josephus presents a picture of violent arguments, disagreements and scuffles over matters of political and community importance, added to the same image of study that Philo depicted. The Graeco-Roman writers have contributed vignettes of Jewish behaviour, depicting Jews as persistent in persuasion, though using their own form of logic and revelling in noisy chatter which uses flowery and over-elaborate language.

An appreciation that these three presentations are alternative and valid perceptions of what went on in 'synagogues' (or προσευχαί) makes a considerable difference to how one might assess and evaluate the behaviour of Jesus and of the gospel 'Pharisees' in similar situations. If the generally accepted activities of the sabbath meeting of the local community were teaching, discussing and disputing, then one cannot perceive in the interplay of question and riposte either the degree of provocation often ascribed to Jesus,²⁰ or

¹⁹ Philo's descriptions of buildings with slabs and inscriptions venerating the Roman rulers do not have *explicit* parallels in Josephus's descriptions and have therefore been considered as no more than *possible* for Palestine.

²⁰ Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 65-67; endorsed by Turner, 'Luke-Acts', p. 105; Brown, *John*, p. 210.

the display of malice attributed to the Pharisees.²¹ The opposing voices are disputing the meaning of scripture in the proper setting for such disputes. They were doing exactly what was expected of Jewish males in a sabbath gathering.

But having an appreciation of all these background data does not preclude regarding the New Testament as a separate source, distinct from the other sources. What it does imply, however, is that the number of possible meanings of the information about synagogues that can be inferred from stories in the gospels is multiplied, since the stories no longer have to be heard solely from the perspective given by the gospel writers. There are now the added choices of understanding what is being said from the stance of Jews like Philo or Josephus, or of a Roman intellectual.

Thus, for example, arguments in the synagogue may be perceived as ordinary rather than extraordinary events, ones which the participants could well have relished, and teaching in the synagogue can be seen as a unexceptional activity of any adult Jewish male with knowledge, wisdom and the courage to take the floor.

So I imagine that keeping the sabbath in the time of Jesus meant resting from weekday work and exercising the mind and spirit, as described by Philo and Josephus,²² by listening, thinking, arguing and persuading in the local sabbath gathering, in ways which could include very heated plain speaking.²³ If that were not the usual practice we would have to envisage Jesus, cast somewhat in the role

²¹ Edwards, *Matthew*, p. 42; but see the contrary view of Harrington, 'Sabbath Tensions', p. 53, that the Pharisees were 'relatively liberal and flexible'.

²² Philo, *Special Laws* 2.60-62; Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.42-44.

²³ An English euphemism for telling one's opponent the most unpalatable facts and opinions at one's disposal.

of visiting know-all, as regularly presenting himself as unwelcome healer at village 'synagogues' and precipitating controversy over sabbath observance.²⁴ It is hard to believe that such an obnoxious visitor would get any kind of a hearing in a 'synagogue' at all. But if all synagogues were the places where disputes were argued out, then a contentious approach would not have been considered hostile, but could well have been welcomed as stimulating.

Synagogues, in whatever form they existed, must have been private, rather than public, gatherings which had a commonly understood purpose, and were quite different from a gossiping group in a market place or at a well-head. There would have been no children, possibly no women, certainly no animals present nor probably any casual passers-by. Strangers who would not, or did not know how to, observe the norms would not have been able to command the full attention of the group present. None of the accounts in Acts of non-Jews being present in synagogues envisages them as taking the floor and enlightening the assembled company. That freedom was reserved for Jewish males, of whom Jesus was typical.

Some commentators believe that Jesus taught in the 'synagogues' because he was a extraordinary teacher or preacher,²⁵ giving the local synagogue a chance to hear his teaching or because he carried out a 'teaching ministry', rather like a public speaking tour given by a famous visiting professor or evangelist.²⁶ But I am of the opinion that that concept is foreign to the material we have before us and depends on importing a twentieth-century model into our

²⁴ As Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 67-68.

²⁵ Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 67-68.

²⁶ Specht, 'Sabbath in the New Testament', p. 93; also Carson, 'Sabbath', p. 71.

understanding of first-century Palestine. I am convinced that teaching and ‘speaking boldly’ were normal activities in all ‘synagogues’. The listeners could and would take issue with the speaker and debate with grim determination if necessary, because it was the important matters of their common life, religion and relationship with God that were under discussion.

As I see it, Jesus would teach in the sabbath gatherings of Jews—though not necessarily in special buildings—as would Stephen, Paul, Timothy,²⁷ and Barnabas, because that is what adult male Jews did when they met together on the sabbath, if any among them had ideas worth sharing.

It is with this image of likely behaviour at sabbath gatherings in ‘synagogues’ sharply in focus that I approach the evidence about Jewish practice on the sabbath which can be culled from the gospels and Acts, bearing in mind that in the texts ‘synagogues’ can mean the people at the meeting, or the building with the meeting going on within it, or the building without the people. And I shall look for any evidence of worship practices in the sabbath gatherings in these ‘synagogues’.

TEXTS ABOUT THE SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT²⁸

In this section any texts which are not germane to the ongoing discussion of the study will be discussed when they are introduced

²⁷ Timothy was circumcised because of the Jews’ knowledge that his father was a Greek (Acts 16.3), which implies that circumcision would make him acceptable to Jews (Bruce, *Acts*, pp. 322-23). This is interpreted as allowing him access to the synagogues (Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. 125) perhaps for the purpose of being accepted to speak in the synagogue.

²⁸ All the texts relevant to this Chapter are presented in the Appendix of Texts for Chapter 6.

and then set on one side. Texts which contribute to the conclusions of the study will be discussed together later in the chapter.

The word 'sabbath' occurs ten times in Matthew, eleven times in Mark, eighteen times in Luke, eleven times in John, seven times in Acts—plus one reference in Acts to a sabbath's day journey.

In Matthew 'sabbath' occurs five times in the story of the disciples plucking grain on the sabbath, three times in the healing of a man with a withered hand, once in the apocalyptic section in ch. 24, and once in the Easter story.

In Mark 'sabbath' occurs once in the story about Jesus' visit to the synagogue in Capernaum, five times in the story of the disciples plucking grain on the sabbath, twice in the healing of a man with a withered hand, once in an account of Jesus teaching in a synagogue and twice in the Easter story.

In Luke 'sabbath' occurs three times in the story of the disciples plucking grain on the sabbath, which is in this gospel preceded by the stories of Jesus reading the law and expounding it in a synagogue in Nazareth on the sabbath (one reference) and also in the healing in Capernaum of a man possessed by a demon (one reference). The sabbath is also referred to three times in the healing of a man with a withered hand, five times in the healing of a disabled woman, three times in the healing of a man with dropsy, and twice in the Easter story. The four extra stories account for the larger number of references to the sabbath in Luke's gospel.

In John 'sabbath' occurs four times in the story of the healing of a man by the pool of Bethesda, three times in a dispute over the rival claims to over-riding the sabbath by healing or circumcision, twice in

a controversy over healing on the sabbath, and twice in the Easter story.

In Acts the word 'sabbath' is seven times associated with sabbath gatherings, six times in synagogues, whether groups or buildings is not always apparent, and once at a προσευχή.²⁹

The word 'sabbath' also occurs once in Colossians (2.16), in a sequence of holy days.

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath.³⁰

This is seen as part of a Pauline admirer's objections 'to Gentile Christians being forced to observe the Jewish calendar and its Sabbaths', and is asserting the freedom of Christians from the dominion of the Jewish law.³¹

Sabbath rest is referred to once in Hebrews (4.9), where the blessing of the original rest of one day in seven is extended into the perpetual rest of acceptance by God available to the readers as Christians.

THE LACK OF REFERENCES TO THE SABBATH IN PAUL'S EPISTLES

The sabbath is not mentioned at all in the undisputed epistles of Paul, which would suggest that it was not a controversial topic between him and his addressees, that they were agreed about the sabbath, one way or another. This is rather surprising given the

²⁹ Acts 13.14; 13.42-44; 18.2; 16.13.

³⁰ This text was already referred to in Chapter 2.

³¹ Harrington, 'Sabbath Tensions', p. 54.

amount of discussion about the sabbath both in the gospels and in the writings of later Christian writers, such as Ignatius, Barnabas and Justin. It is difficult to suggest a reason for this discrepancy, but perhaps Paul and his correspondents were agreed that Jews observed the sabbath, but they did not. They would hold their Christ-centred gatherings as the religious meeting of the week.

Supplying a plausible explanation is the claim of Meeks that 'the great issue in Pauline Christianity is not between "the synagogue" and the sect of the Christians, but within the Christian movement'.³² Because, he argues, the social context of the Pauline groups was never within Judaism, and because meeting in houses arose in Paul's experience before they happened in other Christian communities there is no need for Paul to write of any conflict with the synagogues.³³ He contrasts this experience with that of the Johannine community, where the Christian group is constantly defining itself against the attitudes expressed by groups in the synagogues. Thus, whereas the Johannine Christians had to find for themselves a separate identity as they moved away from their origins within Judaism, there would be no occasion for discussion about the sabbath between Paul and his non-Jewish correspondents.

However, Paul did not interact solely with Gentiles, for he writes of becoming like a Jew in order to convert Jews to his beliefs:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law

³² Meeks, 'Breaking Away', p. 106.

³³ Meeks, 'Breaking Away', p. 106.

(though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law (1 Cor. 9.20-21).

Commentators interpret these verses in various ways, generally using Acts to provide the explanations. Some refer to the Jewish behaviour of Paul referred to in Acts: his having Timothy circumcised (16.3), Paul's involvement in the Nazirite vows of four men (21.21-26), and his using 'the Jewish methods of teaching'.³⁴ Others read the text as implying that Paul 'lived in conformity with the Law of Moses when he was doing missionary work among the Jews'.³⁵ One view understands Paul to be quite distinct about being a Jew by choice in the matters of observance, and about being a Jew by birth and upbringing, and it reads Paul's Judaism as 'a guise he could adopt or discard at will'.³⁶

A slightly different perception is that Paul is not forced to obey the Law, nor as a Christian required to flout it; it could be a neutral matter, and therefore easy to adopt if consideration for others demanded, as for example, eating kosher meat in Jewish company.³⁷

But reading the text, on its own—without reference to Acts—I infer that Paul could if he chose observe the Law, and could attend Jewish meetings on the sabbath when it suited his purposes. So I see in this text the only Pauline corroboration of Luke's account of Paul's missionary activities in synagogues.

³⁴ Meyer, *Corinthians*, p. 271; Goudge, *Corinthians*, p. 77.

³⁵ Héring, *Corinthians*, p. 81.

³⁶ Barrett, *Corinthians*, p. 211.

³⁷ Bruce, *Corinthians*, pp. 86-87.

THE STATUS OF THE SABBATH

As far as the status of the sabbath as a holy day is concerned, we should note that throughout the New Testament it is only the sabbath among the holy days that creates any controversy, the other holy days attracting little attention and no comment, apart from the injunction in Col. 2.16. Certainly there are references to the pilgrim feasts, especially passover, but only in so far as they are part of the activities of the characters in the stories, or set the scene for major events in the narratives.

TEXTS ABOUT SYNAGOGUE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Here, as in the section on the sabbath, any texts which are not relevant to the ongoing discussion will be dealt with immediately. Thereafter texts valuable to study will be discussed together.

The word 'synagogue' occurs nine times in Matthew, eight times in Mark, thirteen times in Luke, five times in John, fourteen times in Acts, once in James and twice in Revelation.

The English term 'ruler of the synagogue' represents different Greek terms. Thus ἀρχισυνάγωγος appears three times in Mark about Jairus and once in Luke for an unnamed ruler of the synagogue, and not at all in Matthew³⁸ or John,³⁹ and three times in Acts, for Crispus, Sosthenes and a group of unnamed 'rulers of the synagogue'. Luke has a similar phrase, ἄρχων τῆς συναγωγῆς, by which he refers to Jairus.

The linking of the words 'Jew' and 'synagogue' in a phrase (ἡ συναγωγὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων) occurs four times in Acts, 'the synagogue/s

³⁸ The word 'ruler' (ἄρχων) occurs twice for Jairus.

³⁹ The word 'ruler' (ἄρχων) occurs once for Nicodemus.

of the Jews' (17.1; 13.5) or 'the Jewish synagogue' (14.1; 17.10). I note that this expression is exactly paralleled in the writings of Josephus,⁴⁰ but nowhere else, and can be regarded as providing confirmation that Luke and Josephus knew similar institutions, and were writing at similar dates.⁴¹

The Greek word συναγωγή appears in Jas 2.2, but is translated in the English versions as 'assembly', and taken to mean a Christian meeting by most interpreters. This translation depends on a belief in the early separation or distinction of Christian and Jewish communities,⁴² which seems at odds with the opening colophon of the book, which both names the speaker as 'a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ', and names the addressees as 'the twelve tribes in the Dispersion'.

Commentators take different stances on the translation of συναγωγή in this text. There are those who believe that the assembly addressed is Christian, because the early Church regarded itself as the new Israel and the inheritors of the twelve tribes.⁴³ Others are not so certain that the two religious groups were separated from each other so clearly, and believe that Jewish Christians or a combination of Christians and Jews are being addressed, in which case the designation 'synagogue' implies a place of Jewish assembly.⁴⁴ Another interpretation reads Jas 2.3, with the allocation of seats for

⁴⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 19. 300, refers to the synagogue in Dora in these terms; Justin uses a similar phrase ἐν συναγωγαῖς Ἰουδαίων in *Dialogue*, 73.

⁴¹ These writings of Josephus come from the last decade of the first century.

⁴² As, for example, Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 601: 'By the time Jerusalem was destroyed, the church had long since become a counterpart to the synagogue'.

⁴³ Ropes, *James*, pp. 124-25, 188-89; Davids, *James*, pp. 63-64; Vouga, *Saint Jacques*, pp. 37, 71.

⁴⁴ Knowling, *James*, pp. 4-5, 40-42.

the two incomers in different places in the synagogue, as implying not a worship gathering but a judicial assembly, after the fashion of the 'Jewish synagogue's *beth-din*'.⁴⁵ Yet others discuss the whole question without being able to draw any firm conclusions from the data available.⁴⁶ As this seems the wisest position to adopt, I will draw no further conclusions from this text, but accept as a possibility that the gathering could have been intelligibly described as a synagogue, and that the religious situation had not polarised sufficiently to demand distinction of the groups and/or of the names of their gatherings.

The word 'synagogue' also occurs twice in Revelation, where it means an assembly or gathering of a different religious group, variously believed by scholars to be Christians or Jewish Christians, or the local Jewish community.⁴⁷ These texts have no connection with discussions about the sabbath.

DISCUSSION ABOUT SABBATH AND SYNAGOGUES IN THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

SABBATH AS DAY OF REST IN THE GOSPELS

The sabbath and what one could or could not do on it is an issue in the gospel texts, reflecting a similar level of interest to that which we have seen in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jubilees and Maccabees.

Mark's gospel reports two controversies between Jesus and other religious spokesmen over what actions could or could not lawfully be

⁴⁵ Davids, *James*, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁶ Mayor, *James*, pp. 29-31, 79-80; Laws, *Mark*, pp. 46-49, 100-101.

⁴⁷ See discussion in Collins, 'Insiders and Outsiders', pp. 204-207.

done on the sabbath, one about plucking grain⁴⁸ and the other about healing a man with a withered hand.⁴⁹ These same two stories are paralleled in Matthew and Luke, and Luke includes three extra controversies over the legality of healing on the sabbath;⁵⁰ but while John records three disputes over the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath,⁵¹ he does not record the grainfield incident at all.

The theological themes which underlie these controversies differ from evangelist to evangelist, as also the amount of literary attention they give to them. It is possible that the controversy stories arise out of scenes in the life of Jesus and reflect vital issues of his time, and were later modified and expanded but only *to some extent* by the early Church,⁵² but more likely that these stories were used *mainly* in the way of authorisations for the particular community's own behaviour in the parallel situations to those described in the controversies.⁵³

One strand of the argument is that Jesus was comparable to David in the providing of food to hungry followers and could similarly override the Law, and also that Jesus' supremacy over the Law was no more than the summit of his supremacy over everything.⁵⁴

Another thrust of Mark's story is to authorise Gentile Christians not to keep the sabbath in the Jewish manner, although the story

⁴⁸ Mk 2.23-28; Mt. 12.1-8; Lk. 6.1-5.

⁴⁹ Mk 3.1-6; Mt. 12.9-14; Lk. 6.6-11.

⁵⁰ Lk. 4.31-37 (note that the sabbath is not mentioned in the Markan parallel at Mk 1.21-28); Lk. 13.10-17; 14.1-6.

⁵¹ Jn 5.1-18; 7.22-24; 9.1-34, esp. 13-17.

⁵² Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 73-74.

⁵³ Harrington, 'Sabbath Tensions', pp. 49-50; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, I, pp. 606-607. Hill, *Matthew*, p. 209, takes an intermediate position.

⁵⁴ Gould, *Mark*, pp. 47-50.

itself assumes that Jesus and his opponents did observe the sabbath.⁵⁵

Matthew adds the idea that since Temple priests work on the sabbath without profaning it (12.5), and as Jesus is greater than the Temple, he can free his followers to do good works on the sabbath.⁵⁶ Therefore, Gentile members of Matthew's community need not feel guilty if they do not keep the sabbath—an illustration of the saying that Jesus' yoke is easy.⁵⁷ This story indicates that Christian re-interpretation of what God demanded was moving away from concentration on sabbath-keeping.

In Luke's version of the story, it is only 'some of the Pharisees' who interrogate Jesus; thus Luke creates an image of two groups of Pharisees, one friendly to Jesus and the others inimical, and he verbalises a debate within the Pharisaic movement as to whether they should join the Jesus movement or not.⁵⁸ But although it is the disciples who are addressed by the Pharisees, it is Jesus who replies,⁵⁹ so the situation allows his, or the author's, less restrictive views of the sabbath to be expressed.

What can be concluded from all the discussion about this pericope is that there was controversy among groups of Jews about what actions counted as 'work' on the sabbath. But there is also a very serious claim being made by the Christian writers of the gospels that Jesus in some way supersedes the old régime as it is presented in the

⁵⁵ Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. 33.

⁵⁶ Allen, *Matthew*, pp. 127-28; Argyle, *Matthew*, pp. 91-92; Fenton, *Matthew*, pp. 189-90; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, pp. 149-50; Schweizer, *Matthew*, pp. 277-79.

⁵⁷ Matt. 11.30; Fenton, *Matthew*, p. 188; Carson, 'Sabbath', p. 75; Edwards, *Matthew*, p. 42.

⁵⁸ Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, p. 172; see also pp. 88-94; Trocmé, 'Jews', pp. 157-60.

⁵⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, p. 231.

sabbath law. Through this story, and others in the gospels, the Christians make the claim that the sabbath has been superseded as the most important precept of the community. Obeying the words of the teacher Jesus has displaced it. The sabbath was no longer the key religious concept, and the commandment did not have to be followed to the extent of complete inactivity.

But nothing is said about sabbath worship. The sabbath is not the subject matter of the story; it is used in the story only to show how supremely important Jesus was.

SABBATH, SYNAGOGUE AND HEALING MIRACLES IN THE GOSPELS

If we accept that the evangelists had theological aims when they wrote, and therefore feel at liberty to look at the healing stories from a literary perspective, then the story of a man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue can be seen as a negative evaluation of the state of religion in Palestine. The existing religion was so distorted that it required the ministry of Jesus to effect a cure.⁶⁰

But, in telling the tale the way he chooses, Mark relates nothing regarding synagogue activities, and one can only infer that the situation in a synagogue, whether gathering or building, on a sabbath, was informal enough to permit an encounter between two strangers in which a healing could take place.

Matthew relates the story of healing a man with a withered hand in such a way as to give his community a view of how the sabbath was to be observed.⁶¹ The criterion he gave them to guide them in what

⁶⁰ Bowman, *Mark*, p. 111; on Mk 1.21-28.

⁶¹ Matt. 12.9-14.

types of 'work' could be done was 'doing good'.⁶² And he is happy to contrast that with the picture he presents of the Pharisees doing evil.⁶³

But the only details given about what else was happening in the synagogue that morning are about a general conversation and disagreement in the synagogue over what Jesus was doing—as he was doing it. This indicates to me an informal atmosphere of discussion in the synagogue.

In John's gospel the story of the healing of the 'dried up' man at the pool of Bethesda⁶⁴ is said by John in retrospect to have taken place on the sabbath.⁶⁵ It is possible that that John has deliberately introduced the 'pallet' and the sabbath so as to involve the man in 'work' on the sabbath.⁶⁶ Then he can make the connection with Jesus' work on the sabbath, which John claims is carried out not merely because he is greater than the sabbath and the Temple and so able to work on the sabbath, but because he is doing God's work on the sabbath and God does not rest on the sabbath.⁶⁷

The story effects three functions in John's theological agenda: it underlines Jesus' authority as equal with God and so above the authority of both Torah and tradition; it displays his power to 'heal' any human who is 'damaged'; and it 'authorises' his followers to tell the Jews to allow and accept that authority. But the story does not tell us anything about what happened in the sabbath gatherings of

⁶² Harrington, 'Sabbath Tensions', p. 53.

⁶³ Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 225.

⁶⁴ Jn 5.2-18.

⁶⁵ Lindars, *John*, pp. 213-16; Brown, *John*, p. 210.

⁶⁶ See also Meeks, 'Breaking Away', p. 98.

⁶⁷ Lindars, *John*, pp. 218-19.

Jews.⁶⁸ The role played by the sabbath in the story is to provide a means by which the evangelist can put Jesus on a par with God.

Another controversy in John brings into confrontation the Jews who allow circumcision to over-ride the sabbath law but not healing, Jesus who has cured the man, and the man who was healed.⁶⁹ By the arguments of Jesus—or the evangelist—circumcision, permitted on the sabbath by Torah, is equated with making the body whole; thus, if circumcision is to be encouraged, so healing should be encouraged, and regarded as another way of making a man whole. So healing should be permitted on the sabbath.⁷⁰ It seems to the modern mind special pleading to consider the removal of the foreskin equivalent to making someone whole, but the argument is presented as valid by the gospel writer.

And in the third story, the healing of a man born blind, the Pharisees argue among themselves as to whether Jesus is good and able to heal as a result of that or whether he is sinful because he breaks the sabbath. On the surface of the story Jesus' mode of sabbath observance is under attack,⁷¹ but at a deeper level, the story is about Jesus' identity. So the sequence of three healing stories in John is part of 'the apologetics of Church and Synagogue in the era of

⁶⁸ Carson, 'Sabbath', pp. 81-82, sees Jesus as 'precipitating a crisis over the Torah', and also implying that he is a close equal to God, since both work on the sabbath. But Carson regards this healing story as referring to a different healing from similar pericopes in the synoptics and does not regard the addition of the sabbath reference as a literary device of the evangelist, so he portrays the Pharisees making the discussion with Jesus as actual historical opponents, rather than seeing them as characterizations of the opponents of Matthew's community.

⁶⁹ Jn 7.19-24.

⁷⁰ Lindars, *John*, pp. 290-91; Brown, *John*, pp. 311-13, 315.

⁷¹ Harrington, 'Sabbath Tensions', pp. 54-55.

spreading Christianity'.⁷² Again the story is not about the sabbath but about the status of Jesus.

Luke's gospel has the greatest amount of text on the issue of healing on the sabbath, but in the first story, the exorcism of a possessed man, as in Matthew and Mark, there is no controversy over the healing,⁷³ and no response of Jesus about the sabbath.

The second healing story is a parallel of the healing of a man with a withered arm, but the point made by Luke here is that Jesus equates refraining from doing a possible good with doing actual harm.⁷⁴

The third story brings in watering thirsty animals as one argument for activity on the sabbath and also introduces Satan into the discussion, and as a anti-type of Jesus. Satan is still working his evil on the Jewish woman on this sabbath but is overcome by Jesus carrying out a good work.⁷⁵ Jesus becomes the most powerful divine being apart from God—another theological point is being made.

In the story of the healing of the disabled woman there is no singling out of the sabbath as an especially appropriate day for healing activities, but rather an elimination of the specialness of the sabbath from consideration when one has the choice to do a good deed or carry out a healing.⁷⁶ The story is less about healing on the sabbath

⁷² Brown, *John*, pp. 379-80.

⁷³ Marshall, *Luke*, p. 234, finds it necessary to explain this as being due to the general pleasurable surprise at Jesus' powers overshadowing any considerations regarding which day of the week it was, and also the exonerating circumstance of Jesus quieting someone who was interrupting the sabbath meeting. As we can see, Marshall confines his explanations to the event being described and not at all to the literary process of producing the gospel.

⁷⁴ Marshall, *Luke*, p. 235.

⁷⁵ Marshall, *Luke*, p. 559.

⁷⁶ Turner, 'Luke-Acts', pp. 107, 113.

than it is about how much of the Jewish religion falls under Jesus' dominion.

In the fourth incident, Jesus dines in the home of a Pharisee on the sabbath. This story might be expected to tell us more about Jewish sabbath practice, if we could determine whether the meal were on Friday evening or during Saturday. But only the dangerous practice of drawing assumptions about what time of day is meant, or whether Friday or Saturday is implied, would lead us to accept that this is 'doubtless a meal after the service in the synagogue'.⁷⁷ The text itself is silent on these matters.

In the non-biblical texts studied in Chapters 4 and 5, the sabbath meals mentioned have been a midday meal on Saturday referred to by Josephus, and, on Friday evening, a candle-lit dinner with fish and wine as described by Persius. This text from Luke adds nothing to the little that we already know from those two texts.

What may be concluded from the foregoing discussion on the sabbath healing incidents reported in the gospels, is that the arguments over sabbath healing actions often took place in 'synagogues', and once in a home, with other Jews called by the gospel writers 'Pharisees'. The healings were not part of the 'proceedings' in the synagogue on the sabbath, nor is there any indication that they interrupted any 'proceedings'.⁷⁸ They caused comment only in terms of whether they were 'work' or not and so constituted a breach of sabbath law. There is no reference to their

⁷⁷ Marshall, *Luke*, p. 578.

⁷⁸ *Pace* Marshall who believes that the screams of the possessed man were causing a disturbance in the service (*Luke*, pp. 234; cf. 178-81).

suitability as a means of praising, or honouring God; in fact there is no religious connection at all to the healing itself.⁷⁹

The Christian writers have used the stories to re-define the importance of the sabbath and sabbath law in the light of the teachings and life of Jesus. They tell the stories about Jesus in such a way that they can make theological capital out of them. Indirectly the new teacher tells the Christians what they may do on the sabbath, and how they may regard the sabbath. But neither he, nor the evangelists, have either said or implied anything about worship on the sabbath.

THE SYNAGOGUE AS DAILY OR WEEKLY INSTITUTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

An issue that is often avoided when synagogue activities are being discussed in the secondary literature is whether there were meetings on the days of the week apart from the sabbath, and whether these meetings would be for daily prayer sessions, or discussing community business.

Chapter 4 discussed the instances of the business meeting on the sabbath, daily prayer meeting on Sunday, and the supposedly religious meeting on the following Monday, called as a public fast, but in reality given over to character assassination and unsuccessful

⁷⁹ This contrasts somewhat with the injunction of Jesus to the healed leper, reported in the synoptic gospels, that he show himself to the priest and make an offering for his cleansing and for a testimony to them; see Mt. 8.4; Mk 1.44; Lk. 5.14. In that story the healing requires a contact with official religious personnel in Jerusalem and the giving of the prescribed offering, but possibly because it was a removal of uncleanness as well as a healing; see Gould, *Mark*, pp. 32-33; Rawlinson, *Mark*, pp. 21-22; Hill, *Matthew*, pp. 156-57.

physical attack on Josephus;⁸⁰ but Philo writes only of gatherings to study the law on the sabbath.⁸¹

This distinction is similarly unclear in the accounts in the gospels and Acts, for the details about teaching and disputing in synagogues are presented in the gospels and Acts in a way that leaves it quite ambiguous whether such activities were *always* on a sabbath. Fourteen references to the sabbath occur in eleven pericopes about sabbath in the synagogue. In the seventeen remaining references to teaching in the synagogues, eight in the gospels and nine in Acts, it is not clear whether this could happen only on the sabbath, or on other days too.

There are two pieces of evidence in Luke's writings that touch on this question, but unfortunately they imply opposite conclusions. First, in Luke 13.14 in the story of the healing of a disabled woman, the ruler of a synagogue addresses the woman angrily: 'There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day'. This implies that she could find a healer, perhaps not necessarily Jesus, willing to cure her in the synagogue on weekdays, and that she would have the same access to the synagogue on those days as on the sabbath. But as this is the only text from which such inferences about synagogue attendance, and in particular female synagogue attendance, may be drawn, I am hesitant about accepting that it conveys a historical truth. There are enough theological reasons for the placing of the speech in the mouth of the ruler to make its historical likelihood less than determinative.

⁸⁰ Josephus recounted these events taking place in the προσευχή at Tiberias, during the time of the Jewish revolt against Rome.

⁸¹ See Chapter 4.

And second, in Acts 13.42, the synagogue members urge Paul and Barnabas to speak again the next sabbath. This implies that no other time in the week was available for the discussion. As Paul and Barnabas had the preaching as their main concern, then it is not their freedom to talk that is the reason for waiting till the next sabbath. It is the availability of the listeners, who are assumed be there only on the sabbath.

Now it does seem likely that the sabbath would be the day when the males of the community were free from work during the daylight hours, and could turn their minds to religious matters, and the Greek of Acts 17.2 seems to agree with this idea, for the phrase about the duration of Paul's preaching in Thessalonica can be translated 'for three weeks' or 'for three sabbaths', meaning 'on three successive sabbath days'.⁸² Acts 18.4 makes the point more clearly when it says that Paul argued in the synagogue every sabbath, or 'sabbath by sabbath'.⁸³ Turner makes the same point more firmly when he says that 'Paul met with Jews and Christians in the synagogues on Sabbath days because that was when the synagogue was convened'.⁸⁴ There would be a meeting of the 'synagogue' only when all the males came together, usually only on sabbaths.

It is similarly difficult to determine whether the gospel accounts intend to say that Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum every sabbath,⁸⁵ or for a succession of sabbaths, the Greek plural (ἐν τοῖς σάββασι) allowing either a singular or plural translation. A

⁸² Bruce, *Acts*, p. 343.

⁸³ Bruce, *Acts*, p. 369.

⁸⁴ Turner, 'Luke-Acts', p. 129.

⁸⁵ For example: Mt. 12.1, 12; Lk. 4.31.

singular meaning for the references in Matthew is preferred by some,⁸⁶ while others feel the issue is uncertain, but decide for a singular meaning on grounds which do not rule out the meaning of every sabbath, or generally on the sabbath.⁸⁷ Fitzmyer is readier to accept a plural meaning, for he translates 4.31 as 'He went down to Capernaum ... where he used to teach the people on the Sabbath'.⁸⁸

Bearing in mind the overall tenor of the references to activities in the synagogues, I am of the opinion that all the gospel references to teaching, preaching, expounding the Law, etc., in synagogues can and do refer to activity during the sabbath day gatherings, and that the gospel writers knew of such gatherings and visualised the ones familiar to them when they were writing down their accounts of Jesus' practices.

Whether they were misleading their audience in a profound way by imagining a scenario similar to their own experience and applying it backwards in time for Jesus—and Paul—is a problem that this study is trying to plumb, but it is perfectly possible that all the interactions and debates took place in ways similar to those described in the gospels, and that it is only the settings, and the terms in which the details are expressed, that are anachronistic.

THE SYNAGOGUE AS A BUILDING

In the book of Acts 'synagogue', as well as being taken to mean a gathering of Jews, can often be inferred to mean a building in which Jews met together on the sabbath to read scripture and listen to

⁸⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I, pp. 413-14; II, p. 320.

⁸⁷ Turner, 'Luke-Acts', pp. 101-103; Marshall, *Luke*, p. 191.

⁸⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, I, p. 541, discussion on I, p. 544.

teaching; but the reference at Lk. 7.1-10 'alone in the gospel tradition points unequivocally to a building', for the centurion had built it for the Jews.⁸⁹

In Acts 15.21, James says, 'from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues'. This can imply gatherings, indoors or in the open air or in someone's home or in a special building set apart for the reading sessions. This text confirms the practice of sabbath law reading which we have understood from Philo for προσευχαί and Josephus for synagogues, although it leaves the location indeterminate.⁹⁰

THE SYNAGOGUE AS COMMUNITY INSTITUTION

Many different activities took place in the synagogues described in Acts, namely: teaching, preaching, reading, speaking, disputing, praying, sitting, scourging, beating and passing judgement on offenders.⁹¹ The synagogue concerned itself with matters of community identity, education and solidarity. Peer group pressures were applied through the synagogue as a means of keeping the Jewish community unified.

NARRATIVE WORLD VERSUS SOCIAL WORLD OF THE AUTHOR

If, as I propose from my study of the extant texts relating to the sabbath, sabbath synagogue worship services were not a regular

⁸⁹ Kee, 'Transformation', p. 17.

⁹⁰ Note also the references to a προσευχή in Acts 16.13-16, which do not, however, clearly indicate a building.

⁹¹ Also almsgiving at Mt. 6.2.

feature of Jewish religious life as it was known to Philo and Josephus, it seems probable that they could not have been known to Jesus—or Paul either. But to explain ~~this~~^{the} apparent disagreement of this proposal with the Gospels, one would need to acknowledge that the Gospel accounts which imply or recount Jesus' attendance at sabbath worship are written with hindsight, which, in this case, makes the image of Jesus' world less clear.

Thus readers seeking a historical perspective have to work within at least two time zones: that of the events described, and that of the writers/editors.⁹² This problem is that some scholars do not distinguish between 'the various strands of the new Testament, so that generalizations are made on texts from Paul and Acts, from Mark and Matthew as though these traditions were not subject to important changes within the early Christian community in the period down to the beginning of the second century'.⁹³ This means that subtlety of exegesis is diminished, in that items are combined which should be distinguished.

And if we give Matthew, Mark, Luke and John equal standing as giving truthful accounts of Jesus' life and teachings, then we do so in the face of the belief that Luke did not give Mark, nor possibly Matthew either, that status, for he felt free to change what had been written and did not feel bound to accept the other gospels as they stood. In Luke's gospel Luke re-modelled earlier material.

Sensitive commentators, however, do take seriously the effect of both the authors' hindsight and their present purposes on the

⁹² Harrington, 'Sabbath Tensions', p. 54, makes such a distinction for John's gospel.

⁹³ Kee, 'Transformation', p. 4.

construction of the stories within the gospels and of the gospels themselves as whole works.⁹⁴

The shift of perspective between the New Testament authors can be more easily detected between descriptions of Paul's preaching activities in the epistles (author Paul) and in Acts (author Luke),⁹⁵ because, in contrast to the multiplicity of descriptions of Paul's synagogue activities in Acts, there is no occurrence of the word 'synagogue' in the undisputed letters of Paul, or—for that matter—anywhere in the Pauline corpus.⁹⁶ Paul's letters refer only to visits to churches in people's houses,⁹⁷ and to lodging with friends in their homes.⁹⁸

Admittedly, Paul's silence is not conclusive, but it is odd, for the word 'synagogue' occurs in Acts a total of nineteen times,⁹⁹ three of which refer to Paul's persecution of the Christians in synagogues, and fourteen of which report visits Paul made to synagogues while travelling in the Diaspora to proclaim Jesus as Christ.

It looks as if the writer of Acts is describing Paul's activities in terms that were intelligible to him and his readers, in what Meeks refers to as a 'later idealization',¹⁰⁰ and that included the synagogue building as the natural religious talking-shop in any community where Jews lived, and as the place where Christian–Jewish disagreements would take place.

⁹⁴ Brown, *John*, pp. xlvii—li, 379–80.

⁹⁵ See the full survey of recent scholarship on this topic in Mattill, 'Acts as a Source'.

⁹⁶ This point was also made by Kraabel, 'Synagoga Caeca', p. 228.

⁹⁷ Rom. 16.5; 1 Cor. 16.19.

⁹⁸ 1 Cor. 16.6–8; the possibility of lodging in a synagogue occurs in later synagogues as suggested by the Theodotus inscription; see discussion in Chapter 9.

⁹⁹ Excluding the phrase 'ruler of the synagogue', which occurs three times.

¹⁰⁰ Meeks, 'Breaking Away', p. 105.

Kraabel brings these issues to our attention in his somewhat ironic tribute to Luke's 'skill as a story teller', for he believes that 'Luke's "theology in historical guise" has become religious history for many historians of Judaism, both Jewish and Gentile'.¹⁰¹ He feels sure that Luke created much of what he wrote and so believes that there is a character Paul in Acts and a real author Paul of the letters. But we have no way of confirming whether the 'real Paul' would have told his own story in the same terms as Luke told it or not.

Hengel attempts to resolve the difficulty of the two pictures of Paul by believing that Luke became acquainted with Paul only in his later life, long after the letters had been written, so that although Luke knew Paul and travelled with him, he did not have access to the letters.¹⁰²

It is easy to agree with Hengel that it is not fair to equate Luke with those ancient writers who freely invented facts as they needed them, but it is not fair of Hengel to suggest that is the only possible alternative to regarding Luke as a relatively reliable historian.¹⁰³ There is a fair spread of possibilities in between these two positions, and I would prefer to locate Luke somewhere in between as a writer who uses and elaborates his sources to make a fresh record of the story for his readers.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Kraabel, 'Synagoga Caeca', p. 228; the quotation is attributed to Neusner.

¹⁰² Hengel, *Earliest Christianity*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁰³ Hengel, *Earliest Christianity*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁰⁴ Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, esp. pp. 9-11.

THE TWO ATTITUDES OF THE CHARACTER JESUS TO THE SYNAGOGUE

What I perceive as having been one of the problems for the authors is the contrast between Jesus' willingness to enter and teach in synagogues, and the situation the New Testament writers knew of being at loggerheads with the Jews. Thus we find in the gospels, on the one hand, warnings given in Jesus' voice to the readers of the gospels about the violence to be undergone in synagogues, and on the other hand narratives of Jesus' going readily in the company of synagogue rulers, either to a meal, or to revive a dead daughter. This behaviour is clearly inconsistent and the writers had to find some way of resolving the tension.

Commentators vary in their degree of discomfort at recognising and discussing these problems. Some treat the warnings as straightforward predictions in which Jesus foretells the future,¹⁰⁵ but others cannot so easily take this position, and so draw the readers' attention to the problem, but on balance still place the predictions in Jesus' own mouth, relating to Jesus' own situation—though having value for Matthew's readers in their time of persecution also.¹⁰⁶

As I see it, the cognitive dissonance engendered in the gospel reader by being asked to assimilate both these scenarios causes discomfort as the reader, modern or ideal, struggles to make a coherent whole of what is being portrayed about 'synagogues'. This discomfort is eased by the evangelists' casting of Jesus' warnings in the form of predictions about the future that his followers would experience. Thus, the reader can be encouraged to accept that Jesus in his own day believed in following Jewish ways but through his

¹⁰⁵ Fenton, *Matthew*, pp. 159-60, 376.

¹⁰⁶ Hill, *Matthew*, pp. 188, 315-16.

divine abilities he could foresee that the relationship between his followers and the 'synagogues' would be quite different. The narrative becomes coherent by this means, and the device functions as another means of underlining Jesus' special identity.

DISCUSSION ON SYNAGOGUES IN MARK

Mark's Jesus teaches three times in the synagogue in Galilee on the sabbath, three times heals in the synagogue on the sabbath, knows of rulers of the synagogue and of best seats in the synagogue, but gives a warning to his followers of the dangers of being beaten in the synagogues by the councils:

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' (1.21-25).

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him (3.1-2).

Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ... (5.22).

On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded ...(6.2a).

and to have the best seats in the synagogues ... (12.39a).

‘As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues ...’ (13.9a).

The synagogues warned against appear to include buildings in which disciplinary beating takes place against Mark’s community. Since his readers could only change from being Jews to Christians after the death of Jesus, and as Jesus had been encouraging his followers to be good Jews, albeit of rather a radical stamp, this saying must refer to what will happen in Mark’s day. The followers of Jesus’ day would have continued to be members of a synagogue and under its authority. But, in Jesus’ future—the time of Mark—the community are going to be punished in the synagogues for what would by then be classed as deviant behaviour or beliefs.

But, in contrast with this negative attitude to synagogues, the gospel also includes a picture of good relations between Jesus and the synagogue, for the synagogue ruler Jairus, described as one of the synagogue rulers (εἰς τῶν ἀρχισυναγώγων) falls at Jesus’ feet and asks for his help, and Jesus makes no demur about accepting the invitation to his house.

And working from my symbolic reading of Mk 5.21-43,¹⁰⁷ with the older woman representing the passé and long-time ailing Jewish

¹⁰⁷ The basis of this reading has been supplied by Derrett, ‘Mark’s Technique’: the older woman had been healthy up till twelve years before, the time of the birth of the younger woman, but has been ill while she has been maturing through girlhood. There is an inter-relation of their fecundities, their times of ‘full life’ in biblical language, for the older woman has been incapacitated while the young one becomes ready. The reader assumes the older woman to have been perfectly healthy beforehand. The younger woman is fearful of ‘life’ but is willing to take the risk and accept the hand of Jesus approaching her in the style of a bridegroom. In the narrative, she gets up and steps into the next phase of her life.

religion, and the young woman representing the timid, burgeoning Christian religion, I find Jesus' words to the older woman, 'Go in shalom', suggestive of hopes of a peaceful co-existence of the two religious groups. Here, in this highly literary story, a more friendly point of view about the synagogue is apparent. And there is no suggestion at all that Jairus feels he can instruct Jesus; rather he puts himself in the position of suppliant.

But there is nothing relevant to sabbath worship in these texts.

DISCUSSION ON SYNAGOGUES IN MATTHEW

On the issue of synagogues, Matthew's Jesus shares many of the characteristics of Mark's, teaching and healing in synagogues in Galilee¹⁰⁸ and giving warnings about future maltreatment in synagogues.¹⁰⁹

Similar issues are raised in this gospel as those discussed for Mark above, but many are worked out in a different way by Matthew.

Some scholars believe that Matthew's use of the phrase 'their synagogues' could reflect the time, after 85 CE, when the Jews had forced the Christians from the synagogues.¹¹⁰ Meeks develops this idea further, finding in Matt. 23.6-7 a fuller and more negative description of the religious accoutrements and public behaviour of the Pharisees who are Matthew's opponents.¹¹¹ Meeks sees their location depicted by Matthew as 'their synagogues', their power displayed in their ostentatious garb and actions, and their teaching function

¹⁰⁸ Mt. 4.23; 9.35; 12.9-12; 13.54.

¹⁰⁹ Mt. 10.17; 23.34.

¹¹⁰ Hill, *Matthew*, p. 212.

¹¹¹ Meeks, 'Breaking Away', pp. 108-14.

indicated by their wish to be addressed as 'rabbi'; and he concludes that Matthew's community was in the process of defining itself as different from a group of 'rabbis' who represented a merging of scribe and Pharisee, similar to the group developing at Yavneh.¹¹²

Kee, with a similar perception, reads Matthew 23 as a response of part of the early church to the growth and development of Pharisaic Judaism, and he points out that this chapter alone includes items that are distinctive to later Jewish synagogue practice, such as the use of Moses' seat,¹¹³ phylacteries and fringed garments.¹¹⁴

Taking a slightly different tack, and working by means of redaction criticism of the synoptic gospels, Hare believes that the persecution of Matthew's community, by the 'Pharisees' in 'their' synagogues, while more intense than that envisaged by Mark, is over and done with by the time Matthew is writing, and was in any case applied only to Christian missionaries, and not to 'rank-and-file Christians'.¹¹⁵ The Jewish Christians are no longer clearly identified *with* the synagogue, but are ostracized *from* it, and thus no longer subject to its discipline.¹¹⁶

Hare sums up the distinction between the three synoptic gospels by saying that in contrast with Mark, who envisages those addressed as all Jews of whom it is said that they will be beaten by their own people in their own synagogues, and with Luke, for whom 'the synagogue has always been an foreign institution', for Matthew it has

¹¹² Meeks, 'Breaking Away', p. 113.

¹¹³ Whether this is symbolic or an actual piece of stone or wooden furniture.

¹¹⁴ Kee, 'Transformation', p. 15.

¹¹⁵ Hare, *Jewish Persecution*, pp. 88, 92, 96, 101-102, 104-106, 113-14.

¹¹⁶ Hare, *Jewish Persecution*, p. 105.

become 'a foreign institution in which Christians of Jewish blood no longer belong'.¹¹⁷

Others believe that the phrase 'their synagogues' could indicate a distinction between 'their' Jewish synagogues and 'our' Christian ones,¹¹⁸ and yet others that there are insufficient data about the usage of the expression to allow the matter to be resolved.¹¹⁹ Hare seems to me to have presented the most convincing account of the use of the phrase.

In Matthew, Jairus is portrayed merely as a 'ruler' (ἄρχων), a person of standing in the community, and not explicitly a ruler of the synagogue. Albright and Mann claim that Matthew shortens Jairus' designation, from 'ruler of the synagogue' to 'ruler', because 'his readers were aware of what is meant' and the longer title was unnecessary, so they would still make mentally the connection with the synagogue. But Gundry thinks that this change of phraseology highlights the thrust of Matthew's editing of Mark, revealing that Matthew does not want to mention the word 'synagogue' in connection with a man who worships Jesus. So Matthew has removed the overt connection with Jewish religious practices by changing Jairus's specifically religious role to a more general term.¹²⁰ Gundry makes the stronger case.

Unfortunately these items only add information about officials and their equipment used in later synagogue buildings. These later

¹¹⁷ Hare, *Jewish Persecution*, p. 104, 105.

¹¹⁸ Harrington, 'Sabbath Tensions', p. 49.

¹¹⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I, pp. 413-14.

¹²⁰ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, p. 111; Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 172.

Jews showed hostility to the Christians on unspecified days; but there is no information about their sabbath gatherings.

DISCUSSION ON SYNAGOGUES IN JOHN

In John's Gospel, there are only two references to Jesus teaching in synagogues, much fewer than in the synoptics, but there are three references to the fact that those who believe in Jesus as Christ are to be expelled from the synagogue:

He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum (6.59).

Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together ...' (18.20).

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue (9.22).

Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear they would be put out of the synagogue ... (12.42).

They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you think that by so doing they are offering worship to God (16.2).

These texts point to John's community knowing of a conflict with the synagogue, and John's Jesus warns his readers of this, but though the warnings are well separated in the narrative from his

teaching in the synagogues, the two time zones and two attitudes to the synagogue can still be appreciated by the alert reader.

The Christians of John's community are not acceptable as members of the synagogue, no longer open to being punished in the synagogues by their peers in the hope of bringing them back to the proper practice of their religion—as in Mark; but rather, they are to be excluded as no longer belonging to a group of which they were once members. They are described as 'out of the synagogue' (ἀποσυνάγωγος). They have been put out by a group of leaders of the Jews who have the power to expel them.

But John's gospel transmits also the contrasting piece of information that, even among the Jewish leaders themselves, those who believed in Jesus were fearful of being put out by 'the Pharisees' (12.42).¹²¹ The break between the Johannine Christians and the Jewish synagogue was in the past, but Meeks believes the break had left wounds such that it is appropriate to describe the new community as '[t]raumatically divorced from the synagogues'.¹²²

But in John, in contrast with the other gospels, no present-day violence is mentioned, merely expulsion from the synagogue,¹²³ except for the curious reference to Jews' regarding future acts of killing Christians as a way of worshipping God. This is a powerful insult aimed at the rival religious group. But nonetheless no sabbath

¹²¹ Meeks, 'Breaking Away', pp. 94-99; Meeks uses the more neutral term 'Judaean' to avoid importing assumptions from modern conceptions of race and religion.

¹²² Meeks, 'Breaking Away', p. 103.

¹²³ It is possible, however, that this would cause extreme social and financial difficulties and was no trivial matter.

synagogue services are mentioned from which the deviants are to be excluded.

DISCUSSION ON SYNAGOGUES IN LUKE

Although similar to the Jesus of Matthew and Mark in the matter of his activities in synagogues, Luke's Jesus teaches in the synagogues of Judaea,¹²⁴ as well as Galilee, reads and expounds the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue on the sabbath, and gives two warnings of danger from the synagogue authorities.¹²⁵ But in Luke the ill-treatment warned against is not so specific and direct as in Matthew and Mark, where flogging, scourging and beating are threatened; Luke's readers are being told rather that they will be taken into custody, persecuted and imprisoned. Compared with the synoptic parallels, Luke widens the possibilities of both the persecutors and the places of persecution, admitting of both Jewish and Gentile adversaries,¹²⁶ but softens the language of punishment. And in all Luke's writings 'the synagogue' or 'the synagogue of the Jews' is plainly characterised as a building, in which a person can move about to take up different positions for different functions. The setting is more formal than that of a group meeting in a member's home.

In Luke's account of the first time Jesus enters a synagogue, he gives a description of a reading and teaching sequence taking place there:

¹²⁴ Lk. 4.44.

¹²⁵ Lk. 12.11; 21.12.

¹²⁶ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II, pp. 1338-41.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’ (4.16-21).

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff (4.28-29).

So the reader learns that Jesus went to the synagogue as usual on the sabbath, he stood up to read and was given the scroll of Isaiah which he returned to the attendant after he had read, he then sat down and began to teach, or expound the scriptures to the seated group in the synagogue.¹²⁷

Luke makes the point that Jesus is behaving according to his custom (4.16) by what he does on that sabbath, and later uses almost the same phrase about Paul in Acts 17.2. Sanders concludes that this shows Luke highlighting the Jewish piety of Jesus and Paul as ‘regular synagogue-goers’, all part of the plan of the ‘narrative that

¹²⁷ Lk. 4.16-29; 4.29 indicates that the group also had been seated.

Luke has constructed with a purpose', namely of showing that it is God's will that salvation be taken to Gentiles and not to Jews.¹²⁸ In Sanders's understanding, Luke portrays the two men in this way in order to give them a good, sound Jewish provenance.

Kee believes that Luke's 'greatly expanded version of the brief account of Jesus' teaching at the synagogue in Nazareth found in Mark 6.1-6' is actually a description of 'the synagogue formalization in the Diaspora', because he sees details of developed ritual in Luke's version namely, the standing to read, the attendant in charge of the scroll, an appointed place in the text for the reading, and the sitting down to expound the reading to the hearers.¹²⁹ But his allocation of a date and place to this synagogue service is no more specific than post-70 CE in the Diaspora.

Fitzmyer expresses puzzlement at Luke's calling the character, Jairus 'a leader of the synagogue' (ἄρχων τῆς συναγωγῆς), using neither Mark's nor Matthew's exact term for the man's position, but he draws no conclusions from it.¹³⁰ It is possible that Luke's personal knowledge of synagogues intrudes here in this variation from Mark's (and Matthew's) text.

Whether the introduction of a centurion who had built a synagogue for the local Jews, supposedly out of love for their race (7.5), can be regarded as evidence about synagogues in the time of Jesus is called into question by Luke's technique of creating theological understandings by means of characters in stories. The

¹²⁸ Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, p. 164, *pace* Rordorf, *Sunday*, pp. 67-68.

¹²⁹ Kee, 'Transformation', p. 18.

¹³⁰ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, I, p. 745; similar uncertainty as to why Luke imports Mark's term at other junctures but not here is displayed by Marshall, *Luke*, p. 343.

characterization of this centurion can be seen as the prototype of the character of the centurion Cornelius in Acts 10, and, according to Sanders, both play the role of Gentiles who are willing to receive the message that the Jews refused.¹³¹ However, it is more likely that Luke knew of such benefactors in his own lifetime and incorporated the type into his gospel, than that he created the whole concept.

It appears that Luke's stories involving synagogues can tell us little or nothing about synagogues in Galilee at the time of Jesus, only about later synagogues elsewhere.¹³² At those synagogues, an attendant (ὕπηρέτης) brought out the scroll and handed it to the reader, who unrolled it and read aloud.¹³³ After reading, the reader rolled up the scroll and returned it to the attendant, sat down and spoke to the seated group.

This description shows only slight developments from the reading and expounding of the scriptures described by Philo and Josephus for sabbath gatherings: the addition of an attendant and a clearer statement of the standing posture of the reader, followed by the teacher sitting himself down to speak to the already seated listeners. There is no reference to any activities that would be classed unequivocally as worship; the situation in that respect is unchanged from that described by Philo and Josephus.

¹³¹ Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, pp. 173-74.

¹³² See discussion below on the portrayal of synagogues in Acts.

¹³³ Marshall, *Luke*, p. 182, believes that this service happened exactly as described by Luke and assumes that Jesus asked for the scroll he wished to read from. But the text does not give any indication of such a request.

SABBATH AND SYNAGOGUE IN ACTS

The book of Acts offers little direct evidence on sabbath observance and little more about sabbath practice,¹³⁴ but states that the law was read in the synagogues each sabbath. The texts do not make plain whether the Jews gather in groups called synagogues or in buildings called synagogues as can be seen from the following extracts:

Αὐτοὶ δὲ διελθόντες ἀπὸ τῆς Πέργης παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν τὴν Πισιδίαν, καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων ἐκάθισαν. μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν ἀπέστειλαν οἱ ἀρχισυνάγωγοι πρὸς αὐτοὺς λέγοντες, Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, εἴ τίς ἐστὶν ἐν ὑμῖν λόγος παρακλήσεως πρὸς τὸν λαόν, λέγετε.

but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, 'Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, give it' (13.14, 15).¹³⁵

Μωϋσῆς γὰρ ἐκ γενεῶν ἀρχαίων κατὰ πόλιν τοὺς κηρύσσοντας αὐτὸν ἔχει ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον ἀναγινωσκόμενος.

For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues (15.21).

¹³⁴ Turner, 'Luke-Acts', p. 124.

¹³⁵ See also Acts 13.27.

This is in harmony with the evidence of Philo and Josephus, but note that here there is no definite indication of a synagogue as building, although a building may readily be inferred.

An interesting feature that I noted in the book of Acts is that although Luke sets out to describe the work of the apostles at a time later than the work of Jesus, and paints the picture of Paul as a later disciple of Jesus, he assumes the same picture of the synagogue in both volumes of his work, making no allowance for change or development during the time span of thirty years he himself claims to be depicting.¹³⁶ This is, for me, an extra piece of evidence that the picture Luke paints of Jesus in the synagogue cannot be historically accurate, even if Luke's picture of the synagogues of Paul's day were taken as authentic.

It has also been remarked that of the three synoptists it is Luke alone who describes Jesus as 'entering the synagogue on the sabbath *in order to teach*' (6.6),¹³⁷ presumably in contrast to a teaching situation cropping up while he was there as an ordinary participant.¹³⁸ In the parallel accounts Jesus merely goes to the synagogue, and while he is there a significant event happens.¹³⁹ This points to the existence of a more elaborate synagogue practice and an expectation of teaching at the sessions. Matthew and Mark describe a less formal gathering.

Thus Luke's gospel, unwittingly perhaps, shows development of what happened in synagogues, for his depiction of the synagogue is

¹³⁶ Hengel, *Earliest Christianity*, p. 35, suggests a time span of about thirty years.

¹³⁷ Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν ἑτέρῳ σαββάτῳ εἰσελθεῖν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ διδάσκειν.

¹³⁸ Kee, 'Transformation', p. 18, my emphasis.

¹³⁹ Lk. 6.6; cf. Mt. 12.9 and Mk 3.1.

different from that of Matthew and Mark. This is, however, apparent only if we compare his accounts of Jesus in synagogues with those of Matthew and Mark which he has used as sources, but not if we compare his description of the synagogues of Jesus with the synagogues he describes in Acts. Between those two 'synagogues' there is no development. Thus we find development where there should be none, and no development where there should be some. This is puzzling.

These two pieces of evidence taken together indicate to me that Luke is writing about synagogues as he knew them, and paints the same picture whenever he describes a synagogue no matter what date or location he is purporting to describe. Luke's narrative depicts a later, or perhaps Diaspora, perspective on synagogues.¹⁴⁰ Therefore the depiction can be faithful neither to the 'synagogues' that Jesus visited, nor to the 'synagogues' at the time of Paul which Luke purports to portray in Acts in his accounts of Paul's missions.

DISCUSSION ON SYNAGOGUES IN ACTS

In Acts, Luke portrays Paul and Barnabas regularly 'announcing the Christian message first of all in the Jewish synagogue or synagogues of each city they visited'.¹⁴¹ And many commentators accept that this is a historically accurate picture of what they did, and infer from it fully developed synagogue buildings with complex sabbath services as a regular weekly event.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Kee, 'Transformation', p. 18.

¹⁴¹ Bruce, *Acts*, p. 263, Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. 134.

¹⁴² E.g. Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. 103.

A more sceptical approach sees the way Luke describes Paul's actions when he visits new places as nothing more than Luke's 'standard opening gambit ... first employed in the episode of Jesus' Nazareth sermon and ... utilized so frequently in his account of Paul's career'.¹⁴³ The point of this stylisation of the narrative is to show that the pattern of an initial positive Jewish response, followed by anger and rejection is what Christian teachers, Jesus, Paul and others, can expect to receive—according to Luke.¹⁴⁴

So if, following the claim of this study, we accept that these elaborate assemblies belong to a later period, then it is about these later assemblies that we can learn more in the book of Acts. Thus 13.15 tells us that the rulers of the synagogue could invite visitors to address the company:

And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, 'Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it' (13.14-15).

But whether this means that visitors could not speak without an invitation is not clear, so we cannot assume that Jesus had to be invited to speak in the synagogues of Galilee.

We also discover from Acts that there were other visiting Jews who spoke in the synagogue, as evidenced by the story of Apollos. He was well versed in the scriptures but was also preaching about Jesus and, possibly, John the Baptist too.

¹⁴³ Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, p. 275.

¹⁴⁴ Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, pp. 275-81.

Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately. And when he wished to cross over to Achaia, the believers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. On his arrival he greatly helped those who through grace had become believers, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the messiah is Jesus (18.24-28).

Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, attends the synagogue where two Christians are also present. He is introduced into the story as a Jew, but a Jew who was ready to speak well of Jesus. Later in the account, although it is not clear that his activities in Achaia were also conducted in a synagogue, he speaks against the Jews, for if he was 'refuting Jews' they must have been present at least in imagination if not in reality. So this story expresses some hostility to Jews, while also describing a communal gathering of Christians and Jews.

The same story also tells us that Christians attended the synagogue, namely Priscilla and Aquila. They attended to the public words of the visitor, but had private discussion with him as well. These interactions highlight the fact that the synagogue was a place where all sorts of opinions and points of view were expressed and even made welcome. In the whole story, only the phrase 'refuted the Jews' indicates a point of view of division and opposition.

In Acts 19, Paul returns to Ephesus and teaches in the synagogue for three months, presumably, although it is not stated, on

every sabbath. But thereafter there was a split in the gathering and he taught his followers daily in someone else's lecture hall.

Presumably these were city dwellers who could walk there from their workplace, perhaps in siesta time.¹⁴⁵

He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19.8-10).

This comment is difficult to grasp, for, in connection with this attendance daily at the lecture hall, it is difficult to be certain whether 'daily' means seven days a week—including the sabbath—or whether on the sabbath all were still attending the synagogue. Was Paul setting up a intensive alternative study programme to that offered in the synagogue, or was this offered in addition to synagogue attendance? Did Paul instigate daily meetings or were they a familiar feature of the intellectual life of the community? The text is too brief to be more than tantalising, but it does not state that either Paul or his listeners had cut themselves off from the synagogue.

The fact that Luke's narrative changes its position on such fundamental details as whether Paul visited synagogues as a general rule or not, and whether his listeners were Jews or non-Jews, causes the reader some problems. The inconsistencies can be explained on

¹⁴⁵ Bruce, *Acts*, pp. 388-89, suggests that Paul did this teaching during the siesta hours when the hall was free, and that the followers gave up their siesta to listen.

the basis of Luke's division of the Jewish people into two sorts, good Jewish people who accept Jesus as Christ and bad Jewish people who resist and remain unconvinced.¹⁴⁶ This theory helps to make sense of the variety of responses to Paul in the different parts of the narrative.

But on the matter of worship in the synagogue, Sanders makes an important observation when he points out that, in the New Testament accounts, 'Jesus and Paul go to synagogue not to worship but to preach'.¹⁴⁷ And this particular form of activity, described also as teaching, arguing or speaking boldly, took place on the sabbath in the sabbath gathering, following the reading of scripture. In all the references which give the reason for attendance at synagogue on the sabbath, there is no reference to worship as the motivation.

SABBATH IN A PRAYER-HOUSE IN ACTS

In Acts most of the references to the sabbath are in stories of visits to synagogue, and have, therefore been included in my discussion on synagogues, but two references (16.13, 16) describe Paul and his companion/s trying to find a προσευχή on a sabbath, and then later going to visit it:¹⁴⁸

τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων ἐξήλθομεν ἔξω τῆς πύλης παρὰ ποταμὸν οὗ ἐνομίζομεν προσευχὴν εἶναι, καὶ καθίσαντες ἐλαλοῦμεν ταῖς συνελθούσαις γυναῖξιν.

¹⁴⁶ Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, pp. 65, 75-83, 263-66, 270-75.

¹⁴⁷ Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, p. 165.

¹⁴⁸ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 495, discussing 16.16, suggests that visiting a προσευχή 'makes sense only on the Sabbath'.

On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river,
where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat
down and spoke to the women who had gathered there.

Ἐγένετο δὲ πορευομένων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν προσευχήν,
παιδίσκητιν τινὰ ἔχουσαν πνεῦμα Πύθωνα ὑπαντῆσαι ἡμῖν,
ἥτις ἐργασίαν πολλὴν παρέιχεν τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῆς
μαντευομένη.

One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a
slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her
owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling.

The text does not indicate whether or not a building is referred to, nor
even indeed whether they found the προσευχή or not, but describes
them sitting and discussing religious matters with women. In fact,
no men are mentioned as being present, apart from Paul and his
companions. But neither is the absence of other males recorded.

The setting is Philippi, a Roman colony (16.12, 21), and Paul and
Silas look for a sabbath gathering to speak at, as is their usual
practice, as reported by Luke. They search for a προσευχή beside the
river and speak to the women gathered there.

Another day, maybe another sabbath, maybe a weekday, on the
way to the προσευχή, they healed a slave girl soothsayer, and as a
result created a disturbance. After that, they are described by the
Romans as Jews (16.20), from knowledge gained in that brief
encounter with them on their way to the προσευχή. So it appears that
no matter how Christian they may be by belief, to others they appear
to be Jews; possibly because of their dress, speech or by their
proximity to the προσευχή.

Bruce's comments on verse 13 are so influential in other scholarly discussions, but yet are full of question-begging assumptions, which must be challenged, that they merit quoting in full:

When Paul visited a new city, it was his practice, as we have seen, to attend the local Jewish synagogue on the first sabbath after his arrival and seek an opportunity there for making the Christian message known 'to the Jew first'. At Philippi, however, there does not appear to have been a synagogue. That can only mean that there were very few Jews in the place; had there been ten Jewish men, they would have sufficed to constitute a synagogue. No number of women could compensate for the absence of even one man to complete the quorum of ten. There was, however, an unofficial meeting-place outside the city where a number of women—Jewesses and God-fearing Gentiles—came together to go through the appointed service of prayer for the sabbath day, even if they could not constitute a regular synagogue congregation. Paul and his companions found this place, by the bank of the river Gangites, and sat down with the women and told them the story of Jesus.¹⁴⁹

Given my working hypothesis that Luke writes about the institutions he knows, then this story of a προσευχή in Philippi could well reflect his knowledge, either of Philippi, or of stories about Philippi. There is certainly no need, with Bruce, to claim that there was no synagogue¹⁵⁰—without deciding whether a building or a gathering is implied—and therefore less than ten Jewish men, nor to hypothesise that the προσευχή was an 'unofficial meeting place

¹⁴⁹ Bruce, *Acts*, p. 331.

¹⁵⁰ In this conclusion he is supported by Sanders, *Luke-Acts*, p. 75.

outside the town'. The προσευχή that Josephus describes in Tiberias was far from unofficial.

Bruce's comments about the presence of the women also seem misjudged, for there is no suggestion in the text that they were running an 'alternative' synagogue for women, or for God-fearers, outside the town. They could very well have been present on the fringes of the gathering, or nearby, in earshot, though not in the line of vision of the speaker. That this is a possibility may be deduced from Philo's description of the women of the Therapeutae. Thus these women would be available for conversation with Paul as he approached to go in.

Rather than accept Bruce's convoluted explanation of why this προσευχή is not a synagogue and not a 'kosher' sabbath meeting, I conclude that the calling of the Jews' meeting-place by the name προσευχή accords well with the town being a Roman colony, for as we have seen that is the word used in both Latin and Greek by the writers we have studied in Chapter 5.¹⁵¹ And it should be noted that the only two writers to use both terms—προσευχή and συναγωγή—are Josephus and Luke, both of whom are connected in some way with the cultures of both Rome and Palestine.¹⁵²

If this text is read from the stance of awareness of the writings of Philo and Josephus, then this meeting place in Philippi is similar to sabbath gatherings described elsewhere in Luke–Acts as synagogues. And there is no need to assume the absence—or

¹⁵¹ See also the inscriptional evidence presented in Chapter 9.

¹⁵² This is interesting, when considered alongside our earlier finding that only they, of all the writers studied, also use the phrase 'synagogue of the Jews'. It seems safe to conclude that Josephus and Luke have some part of their background in common.

presence—of males from the mere fact that Paul is described as having spoken to the women gathered there.

PRAYER IN SYNAGOGUES

One New Testament text that seems at first sight promising in our search for synagogue worship is Mt. 6.5, in which Matthew's Jesus gives advice about prayer:

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men.

This does not make clear, as has been assumed,¹⁵³ that prayer was a commonplace action in synagogues, and may even point to the reverse conclusion, that is, that praying did not normally take place in the synagogue. For there is something to be criticised about the way the hypocrites pray.

It is presumably not their standing to pray that is remarkable, for in Mark, Jesus refers to 'whenever you stand praying';¹⁵⁴ rather, it is the location that draws the eye. Since the three other New Testament references to praying in a religious building describe the location as the Temple,¹⁵⁵ perhaps that is understood to be the place appropriate for prayer.

Opposing that understanding is Jesus' closely following recommendation to pray in private; so there must be some problem with praying in synagogues or at streetcorners that is not occasioned

¹⁵³ Micklem, *Matthew*, p. 54; Filson, *Matthew*, p. 94.

¹⁵⁴ Mark 11.25.

¹⁵⁵ Lk. 1.10; 18.10; Acts 22.17.

by praying either in the Temple, or at home. The requirement cannot be privacy, if Temple prayer is acceptable on other occasions.

Something about synagogues and streetcorners must be different from *both* the Temple and one's private room – and that can only be the factor of an audience who might marvel and gawp at one's prayers.

So, it looks as if praying in a synagogue was just as ostentatious and odd as praying at a street corner, and not at all the normal practice of the true worshipper.

Thus, according to Matthew, Jesus did not want his followers to pray like that. But it is difficult to decide whether this is Jesus' teaching to his Jewish followers, or Matthew's teaching to his Christian ones.

Either way, it appears that from a Christian perspective true worshippers should not stand and pray in synagogues, that that would not be a proper way to pray to God.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have had to confront the difficulty of dealing with the gospels and Acts as at the one time being a source for Jewish behaviour and beliefs in the early stages of the Christian era, but at the same time reflecting Christian alienation from and re-working of that system of behaviour and beliefs.

We have had to hold in balance three lenses through which to read the New Testament texts: one like a jeweller's eyeglass seeking the embedded fragments of descriptions of what Jesus and his friends and opponents actually did on the sabbath, another focussing on the

Christian evangelists' reaction to what they saw their Jewish leader do *with* Jews in the past and have to contend with *from* other Jews in the past, and a third, more like a mirror, reflecting for us the world of the evangelists themselves.

It has not been possible to find any details of sabbath worship from the time of Jesus, nor from the time of the gospel writers. However, Luke gives more details of the sabbath gatherings in his milieu than have been available from Philo and Josephus.

According to Luke's account of synagogues, there is an attendant in charge of the scrolls, the reader stands while reading, but sits down with the others while he expounds the reading. Visitors may be invited to address the group. The noisy arguments and scuffles that Luke portrays in the synagogues in Acts are not very different from the accounts given by Philo and Josephus.

So what we learn of the synagogues at the time of the writing of the Gospels and Acts, although it is from the point of view of wary and threatened Christians, exactly matches the picture already painted by Philo (for προσευχαί) and Josephus (for συναγωγαί and προσευχαί), a picture of a place where Jews met to deal with *all* matters that were of concern to them as a community.¹⁵⁶ They met and argued about political matters, and about innovative teaching and explanation of the Torah, they disciplined their peers for religious shortcomings, but they did not have communal worship on the sabbath. The only text which shows a definite change towards the synagogue practice of later Judaism is Luke 4.17, where Jesus is given the book of Isaiah to read, by the synagogue attendant, and

¹⁵⁶ Acts 6.9; 9.2, 20; 13.5, 14, 15, 43; 14.1; 15.21; 17.1, 10, 17; 18.4, 7, 8, 17, 19, 26; 19.8; 22.19; 24.12; 26.11.

stands to read, then sits down to expound the meaning of what he has read. This is the only gospel text to include scriptures other than Torah in any description of synagogue practice on the sabbath, and the only text in the gospel where Jesus is described as reading in a synagogue on the sabbath. This detail is missing from the Markan and Matthaean parallels, and the only parallel is in Acts, where the reading of the Law and the prophets is described for the synagogue in Antioch, and implied for Jerusalem, on the sabbath.¹⁵⁷ But there is no reference to any activities such as prayer or the singing of psalms that would indicate a service of worship.

The time between the writings of Paul and Philo, on the one hand, and the writing of the gospels and Acts, on the other, would seem to have marked a crucial stage in the development of either synagogue buildings, or of the application of that name to extant buildings—whether domestic or purpose-built; and if Luke paints a faithful picture of the synagogues of his day when writing Acts (and his gospel), he would seem also to have seen an expansion of the synagogue's religion-centred activities, over against the political ones, such as were described by Josephus.

Before that time, there is a much more equivocal picture and the clearest evidence in favour of the traditional understanding of the sabbath comes from the community at Qumrân, or from the Essenes and Therapeutae.

The development of synagogue worship seems to have been accelerated at the time of—and perhaps by the emergence of—the early Christian groups. Perhaps the existence of rival factions

¹⁵⁷ Acts 13.15, 27; 15.21.

sharpened distinctions and hardened patterns and praxis. Certainly the intensity of the descriptions of synagogues and controversy over them in the Gospels would suggest that they were a great focus of attention in the community at that time.

But the Christians moved their attention away from the sabbath. The sabbath no longer conditioned their behaviour on Saturdays. They obeyed the words of their teacher Jesus instead and regarded the sabbath as a day on which to do good, rather than a day on which to be still. Once that distinction was made the two communities no longer had cause to meet together on Saturdays. But, of course, that distinction would happen at differing dates in different places in the central and eastern Mediterranean world.

So in trying to chart the development of sabbath worship we must bear in mind that description of prayer in the synagogue is reserved to the Gospel of Matthew, and even there it is at best ambiguous; and descriptions of singing hymns to God belong only to the daily habits of Philo's Therapeutae, and Jews celebrating the arrest of Flaccus, the Qumrân community, or Paul when in prison in Philippi overnight.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Acts 16.25.

7. THE DEBATE OVER KEEPING THE SABBATH: GRAECO-ROMAN CHRISTIAN SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The Christian texts studied in this chapter are those from the central and eastern Mediterranean in the first two centuries CE which refer to the sabbath of the Jews. They are the Epistles of Ignatius, the Epistle of Barnabas, Justin's *First Apology* and his *Dialogue with Trypho*,¹ with some material from Tertullian and from Hippolytus.² They will be surveyed for any information they can supply about the perceptions of these writers about the Jewish sabbath.

SOURCES

Several epistles are attributed to Ignatius, of which those to the Magnesians and to the Philadelphians are valuable here. He was bishop of Antioch in Syria, martyred in Rome, probably in the reign of Trajan, 98–117 CE,³ though some try to pinpoint the date more closely to c. 110 CE.⁴

The Epistle of Barnabas was written, supposedly in Alexandria, at about 115–117 CE,⁵ or possibly 125–50 CE,⁶ or 130–38 CE.⁷

¹ Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether Trypho is a genuine Jewish acquaintance of Justin from the past re-created in this work (Barnard, *Justin*, pp. 39–40); a synthetic character having some of the features of Rabbi Tarphon of the second generation of Mishnah teachers (Simon, *Vetus Israel*, pp. 12–13); or a totally imaginary character used as a vehicle to display the superiority of Christianity over Judaism (Barnard, *Justin*, pp. 21–25, 39–40, 52).

² Dates and places are taken from *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* unless otherwise noted.

³ Richardson, *Ignatius*, p. 3.

⁴ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, p. 186.

⁵ MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts*, pp. 21–22.

Justin's *First Apology* and his *Dialogue with Trypho* were written in Rome within the period 150–165 CE,⁸ although it has been suggested that the material for the *Dialogue* had already taken shape during the Jewish war of 132–35 CE.⁹

Tertullian, dates c. 160–220 CE, belonging to both Rome and Carthage, wrote around the end of the second century. Sections from several of his works will be considered here.

Hippolytus, dates c. 170–236 CE, is writing at the boundary of the time limits used in this study, but his account, in his *Refutation of All Heresies*, of Callistus in a synagogue in Rome is of value even though it belongs to the early years of the third century, before 217 CE when Callistus was made bishop.¹⁰

BACKGROUND

These early Christian writings are often described as being anti-Jewish, because in them contrasts are made or implied between Jewish practices, such as circumcision and sabbath-keeping, and Christian alternative ways of showing allegiance to God.

Some recent studies, however, have wished to apply more specific language when explaining the purpose of these texts, rather than the general term anti-Jewish,¹¹ because other motives were involved in the

⁶ Prigent, *Épître de Barnabé*, p. 27; Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 68, 446, believes that *Barnabas* belongs to Hadrian's reign, more probably after 135 CE.

⁷ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, pp. 186, 218.

⁸ Barnard, *Justin*, pp. 19–23.

⁹ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. xvi.

¹⁰ Hippolytus, *Refutation*, pp. 338–41; Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, pp. 351–52.

¹¹ See the collection of papers in Neusner and Frerichs, *To See Ourselves as Others see Us*, esp. Kraabel, 'Synagoga Caeca', p. 241.

creation of these documents, motives such as defining *self* through the process of explaining the *other*.¹²

These writers take the stance that the Jews characterised in the texts are 'straw men', exhibiting few characteristics of real Jews. They are limited and uniform, having none of the diversity that characterises real human beings. They represent rather 'the pagan that lurked under the skin of every Christian convert', and their Jewishness is mere 'window-dressing' to allow the writer to re-align the new Christians more firmly in their Christian orthodoxy.¹³ So, although the original motive of arguments against Jewish teaching may have been lost, the form of the writing persisted. This tendency is noted by Simon, who, referring to Tertullian in particular, suggests the possibility that 'the anti-Jewish polemical form gradually lost the real justification with which it began; that it became no more than an academic exercise'.¹⁴

Therefore, alternate, and more accurate, descriptions of this 'anti-Jewish' literature perceive the documents as pastoral letters meant to bolster the hopes and aspirations of a Christian community under threat, or academic exercises in rhetoric whereby the authors score as many points as possible against their adversaries. So, for example, the Epistle of Barnabas has been characterised in several ways: as a letter, or theological tract or an academic treatise on the relation between Christianity and Judaism,¹⁵ rather than being cited merely as 'anti-Jewish' literature.

¹² Neusner & Frerichs, *To See Ourselves*, p. xiii.

¹³ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 137.

¹⁴ Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 139-40.

¹⁵ MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts*, p. 23.

But while Simon believes that Tertullian does not present a genuine attack on Jews, he believes that Justin does. In his view, Justin is genuinely writing against Jews, rather than creating a discussion document for Christianity. He argues this from the fact that scriptural proofs occur more often in Justin's *Dialogue* than in his *Apology*, and he posits a Jewish audience for the former and a pagan audience for the latter.¹⁶ He believes Justin has crafted the arguments in the *Dialogue* to convince Jewish minds, although whether to convert Jews to Christianity, or to prevent Jews converting Christians to Judaism remains unresolvable.¹⁷

As the context of each text cannot be recovered with any certainty, any conclusions that can be drawn about the arguments against Jews, real or straw, can only be drawn from consideration of the logic of the text itself. So that will be the approach adopted here.

THE EPISTLES OF IGNATIUS

In Magnesians 9.1,¹⁸ Ignatius states that part of the Christians' way of life was abandoning 'sabbatizing', and instead structuring their lives around the Lord's day, celebrated as the day of his resurrection:

If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's

¹⁶ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 139.

¹⁷ Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 144, and see also the full discussion of this theme on pp. 135-55.

¹⁸ Full discussions of the ambiguities and complexities of the several recensions of the letters of Ignatius can be found in Guy, 'The Lord's Day', and Lewis, 'Ignatius and the Lord's Day'.

day,¹⁹ on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death—whom some deny, by which mystery we have obtained faith, and therefore endure, that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master ...²⁰

It has been suggested that Ignatius is not referring to the disciples and early followers of Jesus at this juncture, but to the ‘prophets of old’,²¹ which were his subject in ch. 8. But that explanation is obviously open to question,²² and it is more sensible to regard the people referred to as the very early followers of Jesus who were Jews, and therefore observed the sabbath, as he did.

Ignatius is convinced that Judaizing has to be avoided because it ‘implies the denial of Christ’s death and resurrection’,²³ and he continuously argues against a Judaism that he characterises in two ways, to the Magnesians as keeping the sabbath, and to the Philadelphians as accepting circumcision.²⁴

But if anyone expounds Judaism to you, do not listen to him; for it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from a man uncircumcised; both of them, if they do not speak of Jesus Christ, are to me tomb-stones and graves of the dead on which nothing but the names of men is written.²⁵

Ignatius says that you can more safely, in terms of salvation, listen to a converted Jew—who is still circumcised—but has given up

¹⁹ See Guy, ‘The Lord’s Day’, pp. 7-17, as to the ambiguity of this reference in the original Greek.

²⁰ Ignatius, *Epistles*, p. 180.

²¹ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, pp. 213-18.

²² Schoedel, *Ignatius*, p. 123.

²³ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, p. 124.

²⁴ Lieu, ‘Christian Views of Judaism’, pp. 92-94.

²⁵ Ignatius, *Phd.* 6.1.

sabbath-keeping, than to a Gentile convert to Judaism,²⁶ who is about to be circumcised and take up sabbath-keeping. Of the two ways to make the distinction of faith and life between Judaism and Christianity, the physical actions of keeping one or other of the two different holy days says more about a person's commitment than the sign on the body.²⁷

Ignatius urges that his followers celebrate Sunday²⁸ to make their reliance on Christ plain *and* that they should also abandon the keeping of the sabbath to make their denial of Judaism plain.²⁹ This active choice would indicate their faith publicly more than the physical sign of circumcision. Thus keeping or not keeping the sabbath has become determinative for deciding who is within each community.

This type of writing is as much pro-Christian as it is anti-Jewish, possibly because, as Meeks suggests, Ignatius had hostility towards, but little knowledge of, the Jews.³⁰ Ignatius attacks the Jews, and earmarks sabbath-keeping as the defining Jewish practice, but he does not attack synagogues nor refer to sabbath worship in any way at all.

It is, however, interesting that the longer recension of the Epistle to the Magnesians,³¹ regarded as later than the recension of middle length quoted above,³² retreats from the completely anti-sabbath stance

²⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, p. 202, adds the plausible interpretation that a Gentile Christian is implied here.

²⁷ It is relevant to remember that sabbath-keeping and circumcision were the two features of Jews most commented on by the writers surveyed in Chapter 5.

²⁸ Pace Guy, 'The Lord's Day', p. 17, who regards the phrase κατὰ κυριακὴν ζωὴν ζῶντες as ambiguous in meaning and just as likely to mean 'living according to the Lord's life' as 'living a life according to the Lord's day'.

²⁹ *Magn.* 10.

³⁰ Meeks, 'Breaking Away', p. 114.

³¹ Anti-Nicene Christian Library, I, pp. 180-81; Hannah, 'Long Recension', p. 221, dates the longer recension at 140 CE, rejecting the late fourth century date of Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, part II/1, pp. 70-134, esp. p. 125.

³² Prigent and Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, pp. 14-15; Guy, 'The Lord's Day', p. 3, suggests dates of 140 CE, and 4th century.

expressed in the middle recension. In it a modified form of sabbath-keeping is permitted, although it is to be different from the caricature of Jewish sabbath-keeping described as a contrast:

Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath in the Jewish manner, and rejoice in idleness; for 'he that does not work, let him not eat.' For say the [holy] oracles, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread.' But let everyone of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the workmanship of God, and not eating things prepared the day before, nor using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space, nor finding delight in dancing and plaudits which have no sense in them.³³ And after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days [of the week].³⁴

This text describes a Jewish sabbath which has restrictions similar to those recorded in the Qumrân documents, viz. the curtailment of travel and the restrictions about sabbath food. The Jews portrayed 'rejoice in idleness' and enjoy 'dancing and plaudits'. That the Jews also meditate on the law on the sabbath is left out of the picture, and the Christians are directed to a new, 'better' form of sabbath-keeping.

³³ Footnoted by the editors in Ignatius, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 181, as being described in Philo for the Therapeutae. Here the writer makes fun of Jewish worship practices, but in the two places in Philo where plaudits are mentioned with respect to the sabbath day teacher, 'exhibitions of clever rhetoric' are specifically disclaimed, on the first occasion, and refer to an event anticipated rather than the discourse freshly completed (*Contemplative Life* 31, 79), and the reference to dancing describes the measured steps of a carefully executed sequence of movements as part of the celebration of the feast of weeks (*Contemplative Life* 65), not an orgiastic frenzy (*Contemplative Life* 80); see also Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* part II/3, p. 173.

³⁴ Ignatius, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 181.

Instead of following Jewish habits and practices, they are to work at their normal sweat-producing tasks, and eat freshly cooked meals and drink freshly prepared drinks, whether still piping hot,³⁵ or cool and fresh from the well, not having stood in a jar overnight. They are to celebrate the sabbath in the mind and in the spirit, enjoying the wonders of creation and admiring God's handiwork. And they are to follow the sabbath with a Christian day of celebration on Sunday.

This addition to the Epistle implies a later compromise with sabbath-keeping, although not with its external signs. Christians who wish to remember the sabbath day are free to do so, and to think holy thoughts. But what they must not do is appear to be Jews on the sabbath. So they must continue working and eating in the usual manner and confine their sabbath observance to the mental and spiritual aspects of the sabbath day. The group is to observe Sunday in an equally obvious manner.

The longer version indicates that decisions against the sabbath were difficult to maintain, for in it we see a later writer, possibly in the middle of the second century, editing and modifying Ignatius's letters.³⁶ This Christian writer did not believe that Ignatius should have taken such a firmly negative line about the sabbath, and wanted to allow the group members a loophole by means of which they could obey the sabbath commandment. But, as with the 'authentic' Ignatius, there is no reference to synagogues or to sabbath worship, and the distinction

³⁵ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* part II/3, p. 173, believes that warmed drinks had slowly cooled down overnight, making a comparison with Justin's reference in *Dialogue* 29 to the Christians drinking hot water on the sabbath.

³⁶ Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* II/1-3, makes no comment about the origin and purpose of the longer recension. To him the material is not genuine Ignatius, and therefore of little interest.

between Christians and Jews still depends on how they *spend* or whether they *keep* the sabbath, not on how or when they worship God.

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

Barnabas makes the general case that the former ways of worshipping, namely the sacrifices carried out by the Jews, are now abolished. Also, that the fasts carried out by the Jews have not been acceptable to God, and that both the Temple and circumcision should now be spiritual rather than physical phenomena.³⁷ He claims that although Moses received the Law directly from God, his Christian community have received it afresh through Jesus.³⁸

In ch. 15 of the Epistle the importance of the sabbath in God's intentions for the world is stressed, and the true nature of the sabbath is identified as being revealed in God's injunctions about rest on the sabbath. The sabbath should celebrate the completeness of creation by means of rest both human and divine. But Barnabas believes that because of human failings God cannot rest and can only look forward to having true rest after the second coming of Christ when the created world will be perfected.

He argues this from the scriptures and from his beliefs about Jesus as Christ. From the scriptures Barnabas finds that to sanctify the sabbath one must have pure hands and a clean heart (Ps. 24.4) and he combines this with his belief that only Jesus, his Lord, possesses those qualifications. Thus in order to have even 'one [person] properly resting' on the sabbath, humankind has to wait for Jesus to return. Thus, he argues that any sabbaths supposedly 'kept' by Jews at the

³⁷ *Barn.* 2, 3, 9 and 16.

³⁸ *Barn.* 6, 9, 10 and especially 14 and 16.

present time cannot be adequately 'kept', nor can any human 'keep' the sabbath properly, until the time after the Second Coming, when the Christians will be able to 'keep' the sabbath properly. Therefore, he concludes that the Christians do much better to celebrate the day of Jesus' resurrection every week for it is the day which heralded the future possibility that the sabbath could one day be properly kept.³⁹

His writing follows its own eclectic style of presentation and we might not accept his arguments, for, as Prigent says, 'l'eschatologie barnabéenne semble juxtaposer des traditions variées sans se soucier de les harmoniser'.⁴⁰ This style of rhetoric is not limited to his eschatology, and it often makes it difficult to follow the thread of Barnabas's argument.

In ch. 16, the following chapter, he speaks of the Temple, and of how Jews believed that that was the place where God could properly be worshipped. He likens Jewish worship in the Temple to the worship of other races in the temples of idols, and thus dismisses its validity with God whom he believes rejects such ritualised worship. God has abolished the Temple, for—as he explains matters—because heaven is God's throne and the earth is his footstool, God has no need of an earthly temple. He interprets the destruction of the Temple by the Jews' enemies in wartime as such abolition, thus linking the recent actual destruction of the Temple with Isa. 49.17 (LXX).⁴¹

³⁹ See the alternative, but similar, exposition of the same material in Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, pp. 221-22.

⁴⁰ Prigent and Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, p. 40: 'Barnabas's eschatology seems to bring together different traditions without being troubled whether they fit together or not'.

⁴¹ 'And thou shalt soon be built by those by whom thou wert destroyed, and they that made thee desolate shall go forth of thee.'

He himself regards the temple of God as presently existing. By that he does not mean the Jerusalem Temple, made of stone and housing priests and sacrifices, but a spiritual temple. This was created by Christ's death and resurrection, regarded as fulfilling the gospel saying about the destruction of the Temple followed by its rebuilding in three days. This salvific concept is accepted by Christians, but not by Jews. The Christians can therefore regard God as satisfied with the spiritual temple, and no longer requiring a physical one.

Shea decides that Barnabas is thoroughly anti-Jewish and believes that Barnabas opposes everything that is characteristic of the Jewish faith as he knew it.⁴² But this seems a rather ferocious condemnation of a rather generally exhortatory and encouraging letter to a Christian group, typical of paraenetic material.

What in particular causes me to disagree with Shea is that much of the tenor of anti-Jewish feeling in the epistle is generated by the chapter headings found in translations of the text—which headings are not present in the Greek text. Reading the text without them makes the material much more bland in its demands and claims. There appear to be no unequivocal references to the Jews of Barnabas's day, and all the denigrations are capable of referring to groups castigated by the prophets in the Old Testament, or to erstwhile Jews, even, perhaps, to some who are now within the company addressed.

MacLennan reads Barnabas's use of 'synagogue' in his rhetoric as anti-Jewish. He does not accept that the LXX quotations which include the Greek word συναγωγή are referring to 'assemblies' in times gone by. He claims that Barnabas 'is telling his readers that the

⁴² Shea, 'Sabbath in Barnabas', p. 168.

synagogue is a place of the wicked (5.13; 6.6; 11.2) and those who are in the synagogue are unable to understand clearly the covenant (10.12), or correctly interpret its meaning'.⁴³ But a plain reading of the text of *Barnabas* shows that the harangue is aimed at the 'bad old ways' of the Jews in their distant past.

If MacLennan wishes to argue that Barnabas has introduced these particular biblical quotations⁴⁴ as *doubles entendres*, carrying a reference to the local synagogues of Barnabas's day, then he should point out that not only does Barnabas make theological mileage out of prophetic complaints against Jews of the past, he also makes subtle jibes at the Jews of his day. MacLennan must make the case that the words of the quotations can also be heard with a meaning for Barnabas's own time as well as the past. But he does not take the time to do that, apparently regarding the connections he perceives as immediately obvious to any reader of *Barnabas*.

I disagree with MacLennan, gaining my understanding of Barnabas's tactics from the use he makes of the clause 'the assembly (συναγωγή) of the wicked have risen up against me'.⁴⁵ These words are taken by Barnabas as proof that 'the prophet' was predicting Jesus' sufferings. The overt use he makes of the phrase is to align his voice with that of the righteous innocence of the prophet, and the covert use he makes of the phrase is to suggest that Jesus was the supreme righteous and suffering innocent one, who is now vindicated. But that

⁴³ MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts*, pp. 24, 44 (the references correspond to the numbering in the Greek–French text of Prigent and Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*).

⁴⁴ 5.13 and 6.6 correspond to Ps. 22.21, 17 and Ps. 119.120 (11.2 seems to be on totally unrelated matters); 10.12 does not refer to the synagogue, but indicates Jews by a reference to circumcision.

⁴⁵ This pseudo-quotation, used in 5.13 and 6.6 and attributed to 'the prophet', is a conflation of clauses from Psalms 22 and 119; see Barnabas, *Epistle*, pp. 109–10.

Barnabas makes a more secret and polemic attack on Jews in his local community by these words is something that needs to be proved and not merely stated.

So, although it is possible that the use of the word συναγωγή in the letter could signal to Barnabas's readers that the Jews were still as wrong as they had always been, it does not seem likely that this flood of rhetoric couched in biblical language was working on that other level where the obvious functions as a code for the subtle. To be convinced of that I would need to see other clear examples of the same activity elsewhere in the epistle or in other writings of a similar provenance. I do not find in these misquotations of the LXX any attacks on local Jews. And since Justin makes use of the same piece of Psalm 22 in *Dialogue* 98, 104 and MacLennan makes no similar comments about Justin's intentions, I cannot regard him as convincing when he makes this argument about Barnabas's views.⁴⁶

Addressing the matter of sabbath observance, Shea notes that Barnabas has made only two points against sabbath-keeping, namely the belief that the true sabbath will come at the eschaton, and that only pure persons can keep the sabbath properly. So he lists the less exotic reasons that he would have expected to see given for the abandonment of sabbath-keeping: that there was a teaching of Christ about discontinuing sabbath-keeping, a command from, or the example of, the apostles, an abolition of the sabbath law, or a replacement of the sabbath by some aspect of Jesus' life and death.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ MacLennan, *Early Christian Texts*, p. 76, text and footnotes would have been a relevant place to make this point, for he is discussing proofs that 'persecution of Christians by Jews in Asia Minor was severe'.

⁴⁷ Shea, 'Sabbath in Barnabas', pp. 170-71.

If Shea's approach has value, then it is more odd that Barnabas makes no mention of synagogues,⁴⁸ for when Jewish worship is criticised, only the Temple, already destroyed, is denigrated. It appears that Barnabas had no complaint to make about synagogues in his general survey of Jewish ways of going 'utterly astray'; meeting in synagogues is not linked with sabbath-keeping in his rhetoric.

But in my view, more justice is done to the text by ignoring the chapter headings which condition particular, and anti-Jewish, interpretations of the sections which follow. Barnabas was evidently opposed to a group of sabbath-keepers, but their identity remains mysterious. Whether they were Jews pursuing their ancestral religion, or whether they were Christians wishing to keep the laws of Judaism cannot be resolved from this evidence alone.

Barnabas's opposition to sabbath-keeping was firm in spite of having only two rather self-serving points in it, in that he defines a sabbath kept by anyone other than Christ as improperly kept, and then defines the end of creation when God will be able to rest as the time after the second coming when Christ will have vanquished evil and set the world to rights. And it is clear that Barnabas makes these Christian conclusions about the inability of humans to keep the sabbath in the face of the injunctions in the Old Testament scriptures towards sabbath-keeping as a way of showing a positive response to God.

The thrust of the Epistle of Barnabas seems to be towards raising the consciousness of his readers about the ways in which they differed and should differ from Jews. But he does not include any specific references as to how the two groups should *behave* differently on the

⁴⁸ There are no references to synagogues in *Barnabas* apart from the quotations from the LXX.

sabbath, or advocate *worshipping* differently on different days of the week. Any remarks about the sabbath are confined to *sabbath-keeping*. Barnabas plainly believes that the true nature of the sabbath is for rest and as ‘proper’ rest cannot happen until the end of time, Christians should not make fruitless attempts to keep the sabbath. They should distance themselves from the futile sabbath observance of Jews which cannot possibly please God.

JUSTIN’S FIRST APOLOGY

In ch. 67, after Justin describes the coming together of the Christians on Sunday, he goes on to explain why Sunday is the day chosen:

Τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου ἡμέραν κοινῇ πάντες τὴν συνέλευσιν
ποιούμεθα ...

Then on the day of the Sun, we all come together communally
...⁴⁹

[my translation]

He gives two reasons, the second of which is the same as that used by Barnabas—that Sunday was the day of the resurrection of Jesus. But the first reason, based on the creation account of Genesis 1, describes Sunday as ‘the first day[,] on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world’.

⁴⁹ Not ‘hold our common assembly’ as the translator (M. Dods) gives.

This is a very interesting contrast to the sabbath commandment in Exodus 20, which instructs the Israelites to imitate the rest of God at the end of the creation sequence, for Justin asks Christians to celebrate, in their Sunday observances, both the beginning of creation, God's first actions, and the beginning of the new creation, initiated by the resurrection. Thus he gives verbal form to a Christian belief in a parallelism between God's actions at the beginning of time and at the resurrection. God is equally involved in and committed to the two actions.

It should be noted that in this piece of apologetic, the Jewish sabbath is not mentioned by name; it is only present by analogy, contrast and allusion, and can only be present in the minds of hearers familiar with the ten commandments.

Justin supplies different reasons for re-interpreting the plain meaning of the fourth commandment from those offered by Barnabas, although both his reasons seem to be developments of the ideas expressed by Barnabas. He endorses the fact that Christians celebrate the first day of the week,⁵⁰ as commemorating the beginning of creation, and implies the rejection of sabbath rest which commemorated the completion of creation. He wants his readers to regard the second coming as exemplifying the new creation rather than providing the situation where true sabbath rest can begin.

Justin does not speak, in this work, of the sabbath gatherings of Jews but his description of Christian Sunday meetings closely parallels what is known about Jewish sabbath gatherings from Philo, Josephus and Luke, although the Christian meeting incorporates also a reading

⁵⁰ Note that in this argument the name 'first' rather than 'eighth' day for Sunday suits his purpose better; see below in his arguments about circumcision.

from the memoirs of the Apostles.⁵¹ The believers gather together, they listen to readings from the prophets and memoirs of the Apostles, then the president instructs them and exhorts them to imitate the good things they have heard. The subsequent detail, that they stand together and pray, has not been attested for Jewish meetings in any of the texts surveyed so far, but does not seem to be an unlikely procedure for either group and has parallels in the New Testament.⁵² Thus it can be seen that Justin writes of gatherings of Christians similar to the description of Jewish gatherings known from other sources, and Justin similarly does not describe these gatherings as worship. That conclusion is presented by the chapter heading in the English translation only.

JUSTIN'S DIALOGUE WITH TRYPHO

Early in the *Dialogue*, Trypho lists the basic requirements for becoming a Jew: circumcision, observance of the sabbath, the feasts and the new moon, and obedience to the law.⁵³ Almost these same requirements are re-iterated by Justin in ch. 10 when he asks Trypho whether his case against the Christians is based on their non-obedience to the law, with respect to circumcision and observance of the sabbath. He selects these as the distinguishing features of Judaism, and comes back to these two features over and over again,⁵⁴ although on several occasions the requirement of keeping the feasts is also included.⁵⁵

⁵¹ As also the description of Christian worship given by Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, pp. 18-19, 292-95; *Epistulae*, pp. 210-16.

⁵² Mark 11.25; Lk. 18.10-13.

⁵³ *Dialogue* 8-10; 8 has the reference to the new moon; in *Dialogue* 46, seemingly a parallel in English, the reference to months corresponds to keeping the niddah.

⁵⁴ *Dialogue* 19, 27, 92.

⁵⁵ *Dialogue* 18, 23, 26, 46, 92.

Justin rejects the requirement of circumcision for Christians, referring to Abraham's lack of circumcision as a way of showing that the Christians' lack of circumcision cannot make them unacceptable to God.⁵⁶

Justin highlights the failures of Judaism in keeping the laws of Moses by explaining that the new law, given by the new lawgiver, demands that there be a perpetual sabbath. The Jews' weekly sabbath is paltry compared with that requirement, because a day's rest is easy to carry out, but giving up perjury, theft and adultery and becoming totally pure is necessary to keep 'the sweet and true sabbaths of God'.⁵⁷ And thus he, as Barnabas, implies that the Jews are not able to keep the sabbath truly. And he reveals that what he understands to be the Jews' response to God on the sabbath is their idleness. In his view they do nothing for God on the sabbath, nothing active.

Justin takes Trypho and the rest of the Jews to task for the practice of 'cursing in your synagogues those that believe on Christ', which is an activity he refers to several times in the *Dialogue*.⁵⁸ This is taken by many scholars to be a reference to the cursing of heretics as part of the Benedictions of Jewish daily prayers.⁵⁹ And although the texts referring to synagogues give no definite indication of buildings, the interpretation of a building is not ruled out.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *Dialogue* 11.

⁵⁷ *Dialogue* 12.

⁵⁸ *Dialogue* 16, 96; also the reference to cursing is repeated at 93, 95, 103, 133.

⁵⁹ See the comprehensive survey by Horbury, 'The Benediction of the Minim', in *JTS* n.s. 33 (1982), pp. 19-61.

⁶⁰ It appears that Justin uses συναγωγή for the Jews' meeting-house instead of προσευχή, which occurred in the works of Roman authors surveyed in Chapter 5. The meaning 'building' for the word 'synagogue' seems to have become current by the time Justin was writing in Rome; see discussion in Chapter 9.

But in the references to the animosity expressed in synagogues, there are no details of anything else that happened in the synagogues. It is also not indicated whether this cursing took place on the sabbath, most commentators regarding it as part of the daily prayers. Also in ch. 137, although it is not clear, it seems likely that daily prayers are being spoken of, when Justin exhorts the Jews to refuse to excoriate Jesus at the end of their prayers.

Chapters 18, 19 and 21 present Justin's reason for saying that sabbath-keeping is not required of Christians, namely that it was laid upon the Jews by God as a punishment for their shortcomings. The Hebrews before Moses lived godly lives without the sabbath, and before Abraham without circumcision. In this way he gives the Christians a good reason not to feel obliged to keep the sabbath commandment.

In ch. 24 Justin expounds on the superiority of the Christians' *eighth day* compared with both the seventh day of the Jews and with Jewish circumcision; the blood of circumcision is obsolete, being replaced by the blood of salvation. He appears to be indulging in a word play at his supposed opponents' expense, since male Jewish babies are circumcised on the eighth day of their lives.

Chapter 27 develops two arguments propounded by the evangelists that show the absurdity of having an absolute law about sabbath rest and then having exceptions. The first is that used also in Mark and Matthew about the actions of priests on the sabbath. Not only do they continue with their daily practice uninterrupted, but they actually carry out extra tasks in terms of increased sacrifices. And the second, put forward also in Luke's gospel by Jesus, points out the fact that sabbath rest can be laid aside if the day is the eighth day after the birth

of a male child and circumcision is carried out. So yet another argument has been employed to bring the sabbath commandment into disrepute with the Christians and obviate the need to obey it.

Justin adds two more stages in the argument against sabbath-keeping.⁶¹ One is that the elements do not rest one day in seven,⁶² and moreover God continues to direct and control the universe on the sabbath.⁶³ Here Justin develops the argument earlier expressed in John's gospel.

In ch. 134 the two rival groups, the church and the synagogue, are contrasted as a matched pair with reference to Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel. As all the readers know what the difference between Leah and Rachel was, and how age and priority were overturned when it came to finding success and favour, then the meaning of calling the synagogue Leah and the church Rachel is transparent. Christ will love and favour the church out of delight in her. The synagogue will be treated fairly as an obligation or duty. But everyone knows which of the two had weak eyes and was handicapped in her vision. However, there is no reference in the chapter as to how the two daughters or, by analogy, the two institutions, worship God.

What Justin strives to achieve is a way of defining the Christians over against the Jews. He makes distinctions between the requirement to keep the sabbath physically and keeping the perpetual sabbath spiritually, and between the requirement to circumcise male children and the circumcision of the heart or spirit carried out for all by Jesus'

⁶¹ Bacchiocchi, *Sunday*, pp. 226-27.

⁶² *Dialogue* 23.

⁶³ *Dialogue* 29.

death and resurrection. And by calling Sunday the eighth day he can link the two topics rather neatly.

But in all his arguments and rhetoric, and although he contrasts church and synagogue, old law from the old lawgiver with new law from the new lawgiver, physical circumcision with the circumcision of the Lord's (eighth) day, he never contrasts the worship of the Jews with the worship of the Christians; in fact he says nothing at all about current Jewish worship. There is no attack on the 'inferiority' of Jewish meetings as there is about Jewish fasting. Any arguments about the sabbath, and there are many, are all centred on whether or not the Christians are required to observe it.

THE WRITINGS OF TERTULLIAN

The ideas and arguments gained from a study of the writings of Tertullian show little advance on what has been argued by Justin. The same ideas are worked to their threadbare limits.

Tertullian does not present his arguments as clearly as Justin, tending towards a heavily rhetorical and even florid style. This makes it difficult to follow the point of some of the contrasts and comparisons he seems to be drawing. The reader shares the feelings of Strand, that Tertullian weaves his apologetic web by 'the use of puns, irony, satirisation, quick turns of thought, and other devices which at times complicate for us the meaning of his language'.⁶⁴

In *Apology* 21, Tertullian writes 'we neither accord with the Jews in their peculiarities in regard to food, nor in their sacred days, nor even in their well-known bodily sign, nor in the possession of a common

⁶⁴ Strand, 'Tertullian and the Sabbath', p. 129.

name, which surely behoved to be the case if we did homage to the same God as they'. Here he stresses the distinctiveness of the two religious groups and includes in his catalogue of characteristics the disagreement as to their sacred days.⁶⁵

In *On Idolatry* 14 he writes against keeping the sabbath and festivals like the Jews, quoting Isa. 1.14 as the words of the Holy Spirit upbraiding the Jews for their failures in offering acceptable worship to God. He sees the result of this rejection of Temple worship as the development of a situation whereby to the Christians 'Sabbaths are strange, and the new moons and festivals formerly beloved by God'.⁶⁶ He distances the Christians from the observance of festivals once favoured but now displeasing to God.

Writing on the subjects of circumcision and sabbath-keeping, Tertullian expounds at length essentially the same arguments that Justin used against the necessity of circumcision and sabbath-keeping as a way of living righteously before God.⁶⁷ He adduces the cases of Adam, Enoch, Melchizedek and Lot, who were not circumcised and yet were in full receipt of God's approval. Then in chs. 5-6, the same contrasting arguments about the former and bad Jewish sacrifices and laws show how the Christian sacrifices of praise and new laws are much superior. His peroration comes to a crescendo in the following rhetorical climax which encapsulates the contrasts he wishes to draw between Judaism and Christianity:

⁶⁵ Tertullian, *Apology*, in *The Writings of Tertullian*, I, p. 91.

⁶⁶ Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, in *The Writings of Tertullian*, I, pp. 161-63; see also a similar list of festivals in, Tertullian, *To the Nations (To the Heathen)* 13, in *The Writings of Tertullian*, I, pp. 450: 'For the Jewish feasts are the Sabbath and "the Purification," and the ceremonies of the lamps and the fasts of unleavened bread, and the "littoral prayers"'.
⁶⁷ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, in *The Writings of Tertullian*, III, pp. 203-13.

And, indeed, first we must inquire whether there be expected a giver of the new law, and an heir of the new testament, and a priest of the new sacrifices, and a purger of the new circumcision, and an observer of the eternal sabbath, to suppress the old law, and institute the new testament, and offer the new sacrifices, and repress the ancient ceremonies, and suppress the old circumcision together with its own sabbath, and announce the new kingdom which is not corruptible.⁶⁸

He points to a new law-giving with Jesus as law-giver replacing Moses, a new covenant with God with Jesus replacing Abraham, a spiritual circumcision replacing the physical sign, the 'eternal' sabbath replacing the Saturday sabbath, the Christian rites of eucharist and prayers replacing the Jewish rites of sacrifice and festivals. But the only reference to a contrast in worship between the two groups is the phrase 'repress the ancient ceremonies', an indication that Christians should no longer observe the Jewish festivals. This list of definitive distinctions between Christians and Jews makes no reference to sabbath worship.

In both *An Answer to the Jews* 4,⁶⁹ and *Against Marcion* 2. 21,⁷⁰ he points out that the walking round Jericho on the sabbath by Joshua and his followers was not a violation of the commandment for it was not a matter of doing one's own work. Those Jews were doing God's work on that occasion, not their everyday labours, so they were not flouting God's commandments.

⁶⁸ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, in *The Writings of Tertullian*, III, p. 216.

⁶⁹ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, in *The Writings of Tertullian*, III, p. 212.

⁷⁰ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 2.21, p. 101.

In the same chapter Tertullian re-iterates all the gospel arguments about the disciples' eating corn plucked from the field on the sabbath, climaxing with the view that different kinds of work, such as eating and doing good, are excepted from the sabbath command.⁷¹

In *Against Marcion* 5.4 he uses again the oft-repeated accusations of Isaiah, Amos and Hosea against feasts and sabbath, which were also used by Justin. Strand summarises Tertullian's arguments very succinctly:

On the one hand, *Christ's example* demonstrates true Sabbath-keeping as it was intended from the beginning; on the other hand, *Paul's discussion in Galatians* deprecates a ceremonialism which God in the OT deprecated and whose cessation he had even there predicted.

The Christians are to do good on the sabbath, rather than do nothing at all, and they are to worship God in ways that eschew ceremony.

Tertullian uses arguments almost identical with Justin's for not keeping the sabbath, though more lengthily expressed, namely that it was given to the Jews because of their failings. But he adds another stage in the argument by reducing the ten commandments from being God's own words quoted by Moses to being Moses' words. Thus he can show there is not the same requirement on the Christians to obey Moses' words for they are merely the words of an erring Jew.

⁷¹ Also Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.30, pp. 307-310; the arguments for healing on the sabbath found in Lk. 13.15 are re-expressed by Tertullian.

But in all his contrasts between Christians and Jews, and in all his discussions of the sabbath, he never refers to what Jews do on the sabbath or to how Jews worship God in their assemblies.

At one point Tertullian refers to Diaspora synagogues in the middle of an extremely complex piece of rhetoric. To him synagogues seem to be either enclaves or buildings:

He says, 'they have quite forsaken the fount of water of life, and they have digged for themselves worn-out tanks which will not be able to contain water.' Undoubtedly, by not receiving Christ, the 'fount of water of life', they have begun to have 'worn-out tanks', that is, synagogues for the use of the 'dispersions of the Gentiles'.⁷²

Lieu believes that Tertullian is here dating the beginnings of synagogue buildings in the Diaspora to the time when the message of the Christians was being spread.⁷³ She, therefore, discounts his 'historical integrity' and feels secure in overturning this view.

But it is not clear to me that that is what Tertullian implies; rather he says that the synagogues, whether building or group, then became 'worn-out', which is a fair comment from his Christian point of view. He treats the synagogues as places of value in the past, but now superseded. But unfortunately he does not give details of what has taken over the synagogues' role, so there is no way of discovering what he regarded as the role of the synagogue in his day.

⁷² Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews* 13, in *The Writings of Tertullian*, III, p. 249.

⁷³ Lieu, 'Christian Views of Judaism', p. 84.

THE REFUTATION OF HIPPOLYTUS

Hippolytus tells the sardonically humorous narrative of Callistus and his false assumption of Christianity when it suited him, and in the middle of the story describes how Callistus obtruded himself into a sabbath synagogue gathering of Jews in Rome.⁷⁴

Callistus has been incarcerated by his Christian master Carpophorus for having defrauded people of their savings in the guise of banking them with him. But he has persuaded some of his creditors that he has the money working at interest on their behalf, and that if they can have him released he will try to recover it.

He implies that the money is in the hands of Jews and so goes on the sabbath to the synagogue where the Jews were gathered. He 'took his stand, and created a disturbance among them. They, however, being disturbed by him, offered him insult, and inflicted blows upon him, and dragged him before the city prefect.'⁷⁵

The Jews were questioned by the prefect and answered as follows; 'Romans have conceded to us the privilege of publicly reading those laws of ours that have been handed down from our fathers'. They continue by explaining that Callistus prevented this by creating a disturbance, alleging he was a Christian.

Leon concludes that Callistus 'broke into a synagogue in Rome and disrupted the Sabbath service'.⁷⁶ He infers two things that are not explicit in the Greek, that the synagogue was closed to Callistus,

⁷⁴ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 42, dates the Callistus story between 180 and 192 CE; Smallwood, *Roman Rule*, p. 524, suggests 185–190 CE.

⁷⁵ Hippolytus, *Refutation* 9.7.

⁷⁶ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 42–43.

making his entry somehow illicit, and that there was a sabbath service in progress which could be disrupted by his behaviour.

Because Smallwood makes similar assumptions and imagines a sedate service of sabbath worship in the synagogue, she also believes that it was disrupted by Callistus's declarations that he was a Christian.⁷⁷

These commentators, and also the translators,⁷⁸ regard the synagogue as a building, but the Greek does not demand that interpretation. The 'synagogue of the Jews' means the group of Jews who had gathered together to read the law as a group. This is a description of a sabbath gathering of Jews reading the law together.

Callistus rushed into the synagogue of the Jews which had gathered (ἐπὶ τὴν συναγωγὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων συνηγμένην); he rushed into a group of people, not into a building. The Jews report that they were reading their laws communally (δημοσίᾳ), not *publicly* as it is translated, and he 'surprised' them (ἐπείσελθών).⁷⁹ The people were surprised and disturbed, the group was disrupted. But no service of worship in a building is referred to or implied.

We can have little clarification on these difficulties from the author, for Hippolytus alleges that this intrusion into the group of Jews was a stratagem on Callistus's part so that he might be put to death—the logic of which is difficult to follow. Also the narration of the piece is complex as Hippolytus reports the words, actions and explanations of others from different settings and times. Thus it is difficult to

⁷⁷ Smallwood, *Roman Rule*, pp. 523-25.

⁷⁸ See the insertion 'our place of worship' in Hippolytus, *Refutation*, p. 340.

⁷⁹ See the parallel use of this verb in 1 Macc. 16.16, where Simon and his sons were 'surprised' and killed by Ptolemy.

determine how much of the account has been hypothesised by him, rather than reported to him.

However this story increases our knowledge of sabbath gatherings in synagogues a little more, by relating that in the gathering the Jews were standing and that their hearing of the law being read aloud was prevented by the scuffles and disturbance caused by Callistus. There may have been a service of worship in a synagogue building, but there is no evidence of it in the text, and there are no details of any acts of worship.

CONCLUSION

In the eyes of these early Christian writers, Jews are characterised mainly by sabbath observance and by circumcision, and to a lesser extent by fasting and keeping festivals. The Christian readers of the tracts are to take pains to avoid being like Jews, in terms of these characteristics, particularly sabbath-keeping.

Thus throughout these documents, all activities of Jews are contrasted with the 'proper' and Christian way to live and to show obedience to God. Christians are to behave actively on the sabbath in ways that will show others that they are not Jews.

These distinctions reach their peak in the longer version of Ignatius's letter to the Magnesians. Now, while it is important to remember that while the longer recension of Ignatius's letter to the Magnesians may not be *authentic* Ignatius, it does give an *authentic* account of the Christian view of Jewish sabbath practice when it was written. And that is described as being idle and relaxing the body, consuming food and drink prepared from Friday and restricting the

distance walked. There seems to be an implication of dancing and mutual praise taking place on the sabbath as well. This is difficult to clarify, possibly signifying Jewish practice at festivals, but as it is so non-specific it could refer to nothing more elaborate than a convivial Friday evening.

So Christians are therefore expected to do the opposite, to work visibly on the sabbath, to cook and eat hot meals, to prepare fresh drinks, to walk further than the sabbath limits imposed on Jews, and meditate on the law. In the mental aspect of their religious life the Christians may behave in the same way as the Jews. They may think thoughts about the wonders of God on the sabbath, and meditate on the law on the sabbath, both also Jewish practice on the sabbath.

Thus in all the contrasts made between Jews and Christians, none refers to any difference or contrast between the sabbath gatherings of Jews and the Sunday gatherings of Christians. All that is addressed is the reason for the change of day. There is silence about what happens in the sabbath gatherings of the Jews.

8. THE SABBATH AS DAY OF REST AND READING THE TORAH: THE MISHNAH

INTRODUCTION TO THE MISHNAH

There are various theories about and explanations of the origin of the Mishnah. They are usually coloured by legend and tradition and attribute nothing but the highest motives to those untraceable authors who compiled the volume.

One explanation of the origin of the Mishnah claims that in the last centuries before the turn of the era, because the text of the Torah was found to be difficult to interpret exactly, midrashim were prepared which explained the unclear sections of the teachings in the Torah.¹ In time, the quantity of such midrashim was such that a method of organising the material was required, and so, during the first two centuries CE, the code of oral law, the Mishnah, was prepared. Tradition states that the bulk of the organization of the laws and their sub-divisions was carried out by R. Akiba.² And in order to make clear that the oral law was not monolithic, the disputes and disagreements which were included in the formation of the final opinion are gathered together in the Mishnah. The compilation was supposedly completed near the beginning of the third century CE.

Neusner sees the organising principle of the compilers as being neither abstract nor theological, but grounded in the needs of everyday life. So there are six sections covering agriculture (including blessings and prayers), festivals, women, damages,

¹ Handelsman, *Moses*, pp. 42-46 explains briefly the processes which led to the creation of the Mishnah. A more detailed outline is given in Safrai, *Literature*, pp. 227-35.

² R. Akiba died in 132 CE.

sacred things and purifications.³ And although he notes that the Mishnah portrays an orderly world revolving harmoniously round the Temple,⁴ he concedes that the bulk of it represents the views of rabbis active between 135 CE and 200 CE, long after the Temple had been destroyed.⁵ He explains this dichotomy by claiming that those later rabbis wished to concentrate on what they regarded as really important and to build a future based on the most excellent parts of their past.

Sanders takes issue with Neusner's conclusions about the content and purpose of the Mishnah and believes that a fairer approach towards evaluating the Mishnah would begin with a consideration of the genre of the work.⁶ He regards it as illogical of Neusner to insist that the Mishnah couched its philosophical writings in the guise of 'legal discussion about everyday activities'.⁷ The Mishnah—according to Sanders—is no more than it appears to be, 'a collection of legal debates and opinions', and is likened, by Sanders, to the Highway Code.⁸

Details about the sabbath are found in the section of that name, and details of Jewish worship in the synagogues are found within the sections on festivals and on sacred things, but, as '[c]ommon piety is difficult to discover in the Mishnah', only rules about the sabbath and the synagogue are recorded there.⁹

³ Neusner, *Formative Judaism*, p. 112.

⁴ Neusner, *Formative Judaism*, p. 25.

⁵ Neusner, *Formative Judaism*, pp. 113-14.

⁶ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, pp. 309-31.

⁷ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, pp. 311-12.

⁸ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, pp. 314-16.

⁹ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, p. 331.

SABBATH IN THE MISHNAH

There are many texts about the sabbath in the Mishnah, but most of the references are to culpability or blamelessness with respect to possible infringements of the sabbath commandment. Jews were expected to be scrupulous in their observance of sabbath rest, so there are rules to make their understanding of what that entailed less open to personal interpretation.

At first sight the list of thirty-nine activities forbidden on the sabbath seems to include all sorts of unrelated tasks:

sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying (a knot), loosening (a knot), sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking out aught from one domain to another.

But they can be organised into groups that are fundamental to the provision of food, clothing, writing and shelter, 'the indispensable foundations of civilised life as the early rabbis understood' it.¹⁰ And into the category of preparing shelter comes the lighting of the sabbath lamp before sunset on Friday, which action is specifically required of the woman of the house, if she is to be an observant Jewish woman, and wishes to avoid dying in childbirth:¹¹

¹⁰ *Sab.* 7.2; Goldenberg, 'Rabbinic Judaism', pp. 33-35.

¹¹ *Sab.* 2.6, 7; Goldenberg, 'Rabbinic Judaism', p. 35.

For three transgressions do women die in childbirth: for heedlessness of the laws of the menstruant, the Dough-offering, and the lighting of the [Sabbath] lamp.

Three things must a man say within his house when darkness is falling on the eve of Sabbath: Have ye tithed? Have ye prepared the *Erub*? and, Light the lamp ...

But the reciting of the blessing over the Kiddush cup of wine on Friday evening is not strictly speaking a sabbath prayer, as it is recited whenever wine is drunk.¹²

Others texts deal with the overriding of the sabbath by actions required for the proper observance of festivals. Thus slaughtering the Passover lamb, scraping its entrails and burning its fat pieces are all permissible on a sabbath if necessary, but roasting the lamb and rinsing its entrails are not.¹³ Only those actions are permitted that cannot be done before or after the sabbath in question, and there are similar exemptions for the feasts of Pentecost,¹⁴ and Tabernacles,¹⁵ and for former activities in the Temple.¹⁶

However, the Mishnah itself states that the scriptural teaching about the sabbath is slight:¹⁷

(The rules about) release from vows hover in the air and have nought to support them; the rules about the Sabbath, Festival-offerings, and Sacrilege are as mountains hanging by a hair,

¹² Goldenberg, 'Rabbinic Judaism', p. 39,

¹³ *Pes.* 6.1.

¹⁴ *Hag.* 2.4.

¹⁵ *Men.* 10.3, 9.

¹⁶ *Men.* 11.2, 3, 6, 8, 9.

¹⁷ *Hag.* 1.8; Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 212.

for (teaching of) Scripture (thereon) is scanty and the rules many ...

The only action positively required on the sabbath by the rules in the Mishnah is the lighting of the sabbath lamp by the woman of the home; other requirements such as tithing had to be met before dusk.

SYNAGOGUES AS BUILDINGS

In most references to the synagogue (בית הכנסת or הכנסת) a building is implied. It is a shared possession of the members of the community, as are also the public place, the bath-house, the Ark (of the Law) and the Books (of Scripture).¹⁸

References to the synagogue in the main refer to happenings or actions in synagogues for which actions—if carried out elsewhere—the legislation has already been given. The occurrence of the event in the synagogue is merely a special case of the regular happening, as for example in the list of places where it is permitted to use up unclean heave offering oil in the lamps. All places where a priest might enter are considered suitable, so the list includes synagogues, houses of study, dark alleyways, beside sick people, the house of a priest's wife's father, a house with a wedding, but not a house of mourning.¹⁹

Little is said which directly links the synagogue with the sabbath. A possible paragraph—although the sabbath is not mentioned directly—is the one in which provision is described of a

¹⁸ *Ned.* 5.5.

¹⁹ *Ter.* 11.10.

cubicle in the synagogue in which a leper may attend the synagogue.²⁰

When he²¹ enters a synagogue they must make for him a partition ten handbreadths high and four cubits wide. He must enter in first and come forth last ...

That other people would also be there, suggesting to me days on which services took place, is implied by the proviso about his entering first and leaving last.

The holiness of the synagogue building is attested in the lists of possible uses a former synagogue may or may not be put to, and a synagogue can only be sold on condition that it may be at a later date re-purchased.²² If it is sold it may not be used as a bath-house, tannery, ritual bath or urinal, but it can be used as a courtyard. Resting quietly in the ex-synagogue and chatting will not be considered wrong.²³

Even for derelict synagogues only certain activities are allowed. Thus twisting ropes and spreading out produce or nets is banned, as are delivering funeral orations or making use of the building as a short-cut.²⁴ Thus work, remembrances of grief and trivial activities are not allowed to happen in the ruins of a synagogue building.

²⁰ *Neg.* 13.12; only male lepers are referred to.

²¹ A leper.

²² *Meg.* 3.1-2; Safrai, *Literature*, p. 230; Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, pp. 450-51.

²³ *Meg.* 3.2.

²⁴ *Meg.* 3.3.

SYNAGOGUES AS GROUPS OF JEWS

The only reference I have been able to trace in the Mishnah that portrays the synagogue as a group of people is one in which the transfer of impurity due to a person having the flux is being discussed:²⁵

... If they²⁶ were weaving together, whether standing or sitting, or grinding wheat together, in every case R. Simeon declares clean [him that was before clean], save only when they were grinding with a handmill. ... But in every like case they are clean for [ordinary] members of the congregation, and unclean only for [them that eat of] Heave-offering.

The rule seems to be considering relative closeness of contact between people, and the reference to forms of association in the congregation—or synagogue, לבני הכנסה—is a particular example of that. Therefore, those with the enteric disorder are considered clean for being ordinary members of the synagogue, but unclean in the matter of eating the Heave-offering.²⁷

PRAYER IN SYNAGOGUES

The Mishnah lacks any description of communal prayers to be carried out in the synagogue, and a recent survey confirms the lack of references to group prayer in synagogues in rabbinic literature as a whole.²⁸ There are many references to individual prayer, even co-ordinated individual prayer,²⁹ but a group of people each engaged in

²⁵ *Zav.* 3.2.

²⁶ Sc. one who was ill and one who was healthy.

²⁷ Oppenheimer, *The 'Am Ha-Aretz*, p. 137.

²⁸ Sanders, *Jewish Law*, pp. 73-74, considers Talmudic texts as well as the Mishnah.

²⁹ Throughout *Berakoth*.

private prayer is different from a group of people engaged in communal prayer. And, in many cases, the prayers are carried out in the home, as for example grace before meals. So, although it was customary for pious Jews to pray twice daily, these prayers are not described as a group activity associated with the local synagogue. Individual prayer is the dominant image associated with prayer in the Mishnah, and communal prayer can only be inferred from later practice.

READING SCRIPTURES IN SYNAGOGUES

Synagogue behaviour associated with the reading of scrolls, either of Esther at Purim or of Torah on other occasions, is described in the section of the tractate *Megillah* on Purim, so that is where the details about what is supposed to happen in the synagogues on Mondays, Thursdays and sabbaths are given.³⁰

Readings of Torah are specified for certain sabbaths in the year, and for festivals. During the week parts of the reading for the following sabbath are read at afternoon services:³¹

... and on Monday and on Thursday and on the Sabbath at the *Afternoon Service* they read in the regular order, but it is not taken into account ... (*Meg.* 3.6).

Although the section of Torah was read in its proper sequence from the cycle of readings, it is repeated on the following sabbath.³² This means that the sabbath readings follow the set sequence in spite

³⁰ *Meg.* 4.1-6.

³¹ Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, pp. 453-54.

³² Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, p. 454.

of having already been read and heard by some members of the group on the intervening Monday and Thursday, and so this rule indicates a priority given to the readings that took place on the sabbath.

Then follows a section listing the number and stance of the readers at afternoon services on Mondays, Thursdays and sabbaths:

He who reads the *Scroll* may stand or sit; if one read it, or if two read it, they have fulfilled their duty. In the place where the custom is to recite a Benediction one should recite it, but where it is not customary to recite a Benediction he does not recite it. On Monday, and on Thursday, and on Sabbath at the *Afternoon Service* three persons read; they must not reduce the number nor add to it; nor do they conclude with a reading from the Prophets. He that begins the reading from the *Law* and he that concludes it recites a benediction, the one at the start and the other at the conclusion (*Meg.* 4.1).

Blackman's notes clarify the rather compressed prose of this paragraph. There is a freedom to stand or sit if one reads from the scroll of Esther, but for Torah readings the reader must stand. The Torah may not be read by voices in unison, but only by a single voice.³³

The next section gives details of numbers of readers for festivals and on the sabbath.

... any day when there is [an] *Additional Service* but is not a Holyday, four read; on a Holyday, five; on the Day of Atonement, six; on the Sabbath, seven. They must not reduce the number but they may increase it, and they conclude with a reading from the Prophets. He who commences and he that concludes recites a Benediction, the one before it and the other at the completion. (*Meg.* 4.2)

³³ Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, p. 454.

The sabbath is different from the other days in having more readers, and also in the number of the readers being seven. Readings of Torah on the sabbath must be read by a single male, who must be standing. The sabbath Torah readings must follow the programme of readings for the year in an unbroken order. But there are no details given of any other activities in the synagogue special to the sabbath.

NEW MOON IN THE MISHNAH

While the Temple was still standing the new moon could override the sabbath because of the necessity for the first witnesses of the new moon, if it rose on Friday evening, possibly having to walk more than the sabbath limit to give the information to the priests in the Temple so that they could set the correct time for the new moon offerings.³⁴ This exemption in connection with the new moon extended even to a sick man making the journey on an ass, or on his bed, accompanied by bodyguards armed with staves.³⁵

It seems surprising to me that the legislation about the new moon should persist in the Mishnah, but it is in harmony with the levels of interest shown in the celebration of that day as a Jewish festival by both Philo and Justin.

CONCLUSIONS

The Mishnah portrays the same picture of sabbath activities in the gatherings of Jews that has been noted in the other literary sources. There is a concentration on meeting, on study and on

³⁴ *Roš Haš.* 1.4-5; Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, p. 384.

³⁵ *Roš Haš.* 1.9.

reading the Law. But no other activity has the same unchallenged place in the meetings. There are no descriptions of psalm singing or of the saying of communal prayers. The communal activity described is a combination of reading and listening to Torah.

9. THE UNOBTRUSIVE SABBATH: ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA, INSCRIPTIONS AND PAPYRI

INTRODUCTION

As all the previous chapters of this thesis have dealt with the literary evidence about sabbath practice available from the religious, apologetic and polemic documents of the time, it is important to cross-reference that material with concrete evidence from the material deposits of everyday life and its transactions. Thus the evidence from inscriptions, papyri, and archaeological discoveries which relate to the sabbath, προσευχαί or synagogues will be reviewed in this Chapter.

The materials of ancient buildings remain, whether in their original location or moved elsewhere for various purposes. Occasionally these remains give evidence of the activities that took place in the buildings. For instance, many dedicatory or memorial slabs from Jewish buildings have been found, and they reveal the public and private thoughts of the owners,¹ builders or restorers of the original structures. And papyri from Egypt bring the legal and commercial life of the ancient towns to life. Added to that is the evidence from bills and letters which indicates the power of individuals and groups to make transactions in goods and services. An awareness of the civic life of these ancient communities can be recovered from the data provided by the artefacts. And in this record

¹ The distinction between *public* and *private* inscriptions is made by Woodhead, *Greek Inscriptions*, pp. 35-36, the former referring to official decrees and transactions and the latter to matters of family or community concern.

of civic life some indications of the religious practice of Jews is preserved.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EPIGRAPHIC MATERIAL

One of the problems with archaeological evidence is that it is often fragmentary. Parts of buildings, mosaics or frescoes are often broken, missing or misplaced. Inscriptions are damaged or eroded, papyri are torn or incomplete.

Another problem is that buildings, architectural features, artefacts, inscriptions and written texts are difficult to date. Unless an actual dating reference occurs on the artefact, which happens only rarely, datings have to be arrived at by involving the methods of other disciplines. Thus error or uncertainty is multiplied.

Out of the many archaeological items found, only a few contain enough information in themselves to give an incontrovertible set of data. Usually items are identified by means of their position and location, using estimates of the date of the style of any writing on them, or from coins found around them or at different levels in the same site. This leads to all such datings having margins of error.²

And even if one could find a clear example of an early Jewish building, with a sure date and with self-evident furnishings, the building itself would not be able to supply details of what happened in the building. There would need to be illustrations showing typical cult objects or typical activities and celebrations to give an indication of the worship practices contemporary with the building. Ideally a dated inscription as part of the same decoration would indicate the nouns

² For a full treatment of these and related issues see Woodhead, *Greek Inscriptions*.

and verbs associated with the activities portrayed, and allow comparison with literary materials. But there have been no such finds for synagogues before the third century CE.

But even with perfectly clear inscriptions there are also problems. The stones may have been moved far from their original site before being studied by an expert, who is therefore handicapped by lack of context for the stone on which the inscription has been incised. Without the location and the evidence from the surrounding artefacts, making judgements about any inscription is much more difficult.

Reconstructions for missing sections of the material often depend on the existence, in a better state of preservation, of parallel material. But the judgement as to what can be considered parallel material depends on many factors. Thus fragmentary inscriptions always remain fragmentary and have to be made use of in that state, even if read alongside their reconstructed selves.

The modern language into which the inscription is first translated can also affect its perceived meaning, partly because of the range of meaning in the second language, and partly because of the cultural and educational background of scholars speaking that particular language. For this and all the other reasons cited above, I have always used two or more editions for each inscription.

However, on the positive side, it can be said that inscriptions 'are almost always contemporary with the people and events mentioned', and often give both historical and linguistic data which bring 'insights into the life of individuals and groups'.³ This highlights the value of inscriptions, and also of papyri, which must be set against

³ Thus Filson, 'Synagogue Inscriptions', p. 41, prefaces his summary of Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*.

the drawbacks listed above, and it is because of this aspect of the data that they have been included here.

The epigraphic material provides both the public and the private expression of the views of persons who paid for the inscriptions or documents to be prepared. Thus it may be possible to discover from them the views that widely separated groups of Jews held about their communal religious life, and about the sabbath, and whether these expressed views included, or could include, the concept worship.

A substantial difficulty encountered in working with the papyrus material is that the editors of the *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum* assume that any reference to a synagogue, apparently also including honorific titles which include the term synagogue, will indicate the existence of an organised Jewish community with a communal building called a synagogue.⁴ They infer the existence of these synagogues and refer to them as places for meetings, deliberations, prayer, study and hospitality for strangers. They further assert that in 'Egypt a synagogue was called a *proseuche* (προσευχή), a place of prayer'. An unfortunate side effect of this way of dealing with the terms *προσευχή* and synagogue is that no distinction is made between the usages of the two terms, and so any nuances of meaning, in particular of the word 'synagogue', are lost both in the translations supplied and in the discussion about the inscriptions.

I, on the other hand, believe that the phrases 'synagogue of the Jews' and 'leader of the synagogue', when employed in inscriptions, always relate to the congregation in question but do not refer to a building nor necessarily imply the existence of a building.

⁴ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, pp. 7-8.

Therefore, I have read all the papyri and inscriptions from the standpoint that προσευχή means a building and συναγωγή means a group of Jews who made community decisions. Thus architectural or epigraphic evidence for the existence of προσευχαί is not here regarded as evidence for the existence of synagogue buildings. Any instances of synagogue buildings will be authenticated by archaeological material which indicates that those buildings were known as synagogues. As a result of taking this position I will not say that Jews dedicated their synagogue to a ruler, but rather that synagogues of Jews dedicated their προσευχαί to a ruler.

The work of Leon raises another methodological point, for as he deals only with the epitaphs of the Jewish catacombs in Rome, his evidence cannot be archaeological data about synagogues or *proseuchae*. It must be regarded as literary, not archaeological, evidence, because in order for an inscription to be archaeological evidence it would have to be on a stone that was part of the structure of the building it described.

The numbers in brackets for each inscription are those assigned by Frey, and are given when, as far as can be determined, the inscription has come from a structural part of a building where Jews congregated. The language of the inscriptions will be specified only if it is other than Greek.

The relevant inscriptions and papyri will be presented and explained, then the discussion which follows will homologate what may be known from other archaeological features with what may be known from the written material.

LOCATIONS

In the first century CE, several large Jewish communities were flourishing in cities of the central and eastern Mediterranean, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome, Antioch and Caesarea having the largest numbers,⁵ and there seems to be enough similarity in what has been found in the different communities settled round the Mediterranean area from Rome to Palestine to Cyrenaica to permit scholars to make comparisons across the region.⁶

ROME

The epigraphic evidence from Rome is from sepulchral inscriptions from the catacombs only. Five inscriptions referring to an archisynagogos (one in Latin), of which two specify the name of the synagogue the person belonged to;⁷ and seven epitaphs, referring to persons as 'father of the synagogue',⁸ and two as 'mother of the synagogue' (one in Latin),⁹ give confirmation of the numbers of different congregations of Jews in Rome. Altogether the inscriptions indicate that there were sixteen synagogues in Rome,¹⁰ but none of these inscriptions indicates the definite presence of a building. The

⁵ Levine, *Caesarea*, p. 22.

⁶ Horbury, 'The Benediction of the Minim', pp. 48-49, speaking of the second century CE, says that such comparisons are valuable because of 'the degree of solidarity between Jewry in Dispersion and in the Land assumed in the ancient sources' and adds that 'Roman legislation presupposes a scattered but unified Jewish ethnos'; Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 173-74, speaking of the occurrence of the word ἄρχων in inscriptions, finds a similarity of occurrence from various 'parts of the Jewish world, not only from Italy, but also from the eastern and western Mediterranean areas and from Egypt and North Africa'.

⁷ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 171, 303, 306, 314, 322, 339.

⁸ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 186-88.

⁹ Broton, *Women Leaders*, pp. 57-72; Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 188-89.

¹⁰ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 139-40.

dates of the catacomb inscriptions are from the first century BCE to the third century CE.¹¹

Leon maintains throughout the distinction of the groups, or congregations, and the buildings Jews met in, applying different terms to each, synagogue and *proseucha*. He finds that the sepulchral inscriptions never mention the building, *proseucha* or προσευχή, the sole occurrence of a building called a *proseucha* being in the business address, 'at the wall by the synagogue' [*sic*]¹² given in the epitaph of a deceased non-Jewish Roman fruit vendor.

DIS M
P CORFIDIO SIGNINO
POMARIO
DE AGGERE
A PROSEUCHA
Q SALLUSTIUS HERMES
AMICO BENEMERENTI
ET NUMERUM OLLARUM DECEM¹³

To the divine shades—Publius Corfidius, of Segni, fruit vendor at the rampart by the prayer-house, Quintus Sallustius Hermes to his worthy friend and the number of urns is ten. [my translation]

This inscription has to be treated as a literary text about *proseuchae*, since it is not a tablet or slab from the structure of a *proseucha*. Thus it adds to the *literary* evidence of Juvenal and Philo as to the existence of *proseuchae* in Rome.

There are no inscriptions on structural stonework from any *proseuchae* or synagogue buildings in Rome from the period of this study.

¹¹ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, pp. 65-66.

¹² Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 139, here contradicts his own avowed distinction.

¹³ Leon, *Ancient Rome*, p. 139; Frey, *Corpus I*, p. 391.

ELSEWHERE IN ITALY

There are two Latin inscriptions to ‘mothers of the synagogue’, indicating groups of Jews in Venosa and Venetia,¹⁴ but, *pace* Brooten, this does not necessarily indicate the existence of a synagogue building in those places.¹⁵

GREECE

CORINTH

An inscription (718), roughly incised in sloping, uneven characters on a marble lintel, dated between 100 BCE and 200 CE, has been restored to read ‘the synagogue of the Hebrews’.¹⁶

[Συνα]γωγὴ Ἑβρ[αίων]

This indicates that the building was used by, or known as, the synagogue of Hebrews.

EGINE (or Aegina)

Two undated inscriptions on a mosaic floor (722, 723), complete but with some letters eroded, report the deeds of an archisynagogos who re-built a synagogue building from the foundations, and of someone of the same name, but younger, who, using the revenues of

¹⁴ Brooten, *Women Leaders*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁵ Brooten, *Women Leaders*, pp. 28-29, assumes that the existence of an official called an archisynagogos implies a synagogue building.

¹⁶ Frey, *Corpus*, I, p. 518.

the synagogue completed the mosaics.¹⁷ The second of the two does not refer to the synagogue building directly, but 722 does.

Θεόδωρος ἀρχισυν[άγωγος φ]ροντίσας ἔτη τέσσερα
[φθαρεῖσαν?] ἐκ θεμελίων τὴν συναγ[ωγὴν] οἰκοδόμησα.
Προσοδεύ[θησαν] χρύσιν[ο]ι [ρ]ε' καὶ ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Θε(οῦ)
δωρεῶν χρύσινοι ρο' ...¹⁸

I, Theodorus, the Archisynagogos, who functioned for four years built this synagogue from its foundations. Revenues amounted to 85 pieces of gold (i.e. gold dinars), and offerings unto God to 105 pieces of gold.¹⁹

The lack of any definite date for either of the inscriptions makes the information they give quite tantalising, since the first is one of the few clear pieces of evidence for the word 'synagogue' meaning unequivocally a building.

However, an attempt at dating can be made using two approaches. First, because the earliest synagogues had floors paved with flagstones the fact that the whole floor of this synagogue was covered by a complete mosaic with a central design and complex border is evidence that this building is from a later period.²⁰ Also, from the evidence of secondary use in buildings close at hand of the stones from this synagogue, the same building appears to have remained standing until the seventh century CE. So, on the basis of these two pieces of evidence I accept the suggestion of a fourth

¹⁷ Frey, *Corpus*, I, p. 522; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 13-14; Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 44, Pl. XI.

¹⁸ Inscription 722, as photographed in 1928, retains only the first letter of the word συναγωγῇ, but Frey gives the first five letters of the word as extant.

¹⁹ Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 44.

²⁰ Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 27-28; although the clearest sign of fourth century CE provenance—depictions of animals in the design—is not present.

century CE origin for the inscriptions,²¹ and therefore exclude them as evidence in this study.

DELOS

A brief inscription (726), dated to the second century BCE, indicates a donation or contribution to the προσευχή by persons named Agathocles and Lysimachos.²²

Ἀγαθοκλῆς
καὶ Λυσίμα
χος ἐπὶ
προσευχῇ

Agathocles
and Lysima-
chos for the
prayer-house
[my translation]

PANNONIA

MURSA (modern Osijek)

A marble slab has been found with a fragmentary Latin inscription (678a), dating from around the close of the second century CE or the beginning of the third, indicating the existence of a *proseucha* building in Mursa.²³

PP	[Pro salute im]p(eratorum)
RTINACIS	[L(ucii) Sept(imii) Severi Pe]rtinacis
AUGG	[et M(arci) Aur(elii) Antonini] Aug(ustoruni)
RORUM	[et Iuliae Aug(ustae) matris cast]rorum
NDUS[Secu]ndus
SEUCHAM	[.....pro]seucham
STATE	[.....vetu] state
LO	[conlapsam a so]lo
	[restituit].

²¹ Cf. the inscription (720) of a donation of a vestibule to a synagogue, which similarly implies a building, and is similarly dated to the fourth century CE, Frey, *Corpus*, I, p. 520; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 16-17.

²² Frey, *Corpus*, I, p. 525; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 14-15; Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 37-40, pl. X.

²³ Frey, *Corpus*, I, pp. 60-61, reconstruction of Comfort supplied by Lifshitz.

For the safety of the emperors Lucius Septimius Severus
 Pertinax and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the Augusti and
 Iulia Augusta mother of the camps, Secundus has restored from
 the foundations the synagogue [*sic*] fallen from age.
 [translation: Lifshitz]

This inscription highlights the extent of the geographical range of occurrences of the word *proseucha* used to mean a religious building, and the restored opening section shows that addressing the Roman ruler in an conciliatory manner was a possible opening for an inscription.

THE NORTHERN SHORES OF THE BLACK SEA

OLBIA

A marble plaque, now lost, bears an inscription (682), about a group of named men who restored the προσευχή there.²⁴ There is no date for the inscription, and there are disagreements as to the restoration of the end of the inscription, but the relevant section reads:

... ἄρχ[οντες] τὴν προσευχὴν ἐ[πε]σκεύασαν τῇ ἐαυ[τῶν]
 προνοίᾳ στεγάσα[ντες] ...

... rulers repaired the προσευχή by their own forethought,
 having covered[my translation]

The Jewish provenance of this inscription is disputed, partly because of the names of the men: Satyros, son and grandson of Artemidoros; Achilles, son of Demetrios; Dionysiodorus, son of Eros, and Zobeis, son of Zobeis. These names are more typically Greek than Jewish. The other strand of uncertainty is caused by the restoration of

²⁴ Latyshev, *Inscriptiones*, I, pp. 189-91; Frey, *Corpus*, I, pp. 493-94; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 19-20.

the last line to read ἀπὸ τοῦ ΘΕΟΥ μέχρι[...], which can be considered to be addressed to a pagan god.²⁵ Liddell and Scott regard this inscription as evidence of a pagan προσευχή,²⁶ but since no other evidence supports that view, I accept, following Frey, the Jewish origin of the inscription.

The prayer-house is clearly a building as it is described as having been restored.

PANTICAPE (Kertsch)

1 A well-preserved inscription of nineteen lines on a marble slab (683), and dated internally to c. 80 CE, links the προσευχή building and the actions of the local Jewish community.²⁷

Βασιλεύοντος Βασιλέως Τιβε
ρίου Ἰουλίου Ῥησκουπόριδος φιλο
καίσαρος καὶ φιλορωμαίου, εὖσε
βοῦς, ἔτους ζοτ' μηνὸς Περει[τί]
5 ου ιβ', Χρήστη γυνὴ πρότε
ρον Δρούσου ἀφείημι ἐπὶ τῆς [προ]
σευχῆς θρεπτόν μου Ἑρακλᾶν
ἐλεύθερον καθάπαξ κατὰ εὐχή[ν]
μου ἀνεπίλεπτον καὶ ἀπα[ρ]ενό
10 χλητον ἀπὸ παντὸς κληρονόμ[ου].
τῖρέπεσ(θ)αι αὐτὸν ὅπου ἂν βού
λ[ητ]αι ἀνεπικωλύτως καθὼς ε[ὐ]
ξάμην, χωρὶς ἰς τ[ῇ]ν προ[ς]ευ
χὴν θωπείας τε καὶ προσκα[ρτε]
15 ρ]ήσεω[ς], συνεπινευσάντων δὲ
καὶ τῶν κληρ(ο)νόμων μου Ἑρα
κλεί[δο]υ καὶ Ἑλικωνιάδος,
συνε[πιτ]ροπεύσης δὲ καὶ τῇ[ς]
συναγωγῇ[ς] τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

²⁵ Lifshitz reads the word as θεμελίου, so 'from the foundation'.

²⁶ *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1151, s.v. προσευχή.

²⁷ Latyshev, *Inscriptiones*, II, pp. 49-51; Frey, *Corpus*, I, pp. 495-96.

In the reign of King Tiberius Julius Rescuporis, friend of Caesar and friend of the Romans, and pious, in the year 377 (80 CE), on the twelfth of the month Peritios, I, Chreste, former wife of Drousos, release, in the προσευχή, my home-reared slave Heraclas, free, once and for all, according to my vow, irrevocable and unable to be altered by any of my heirs, to go wherever he wishes, unhindered, according as I have vowed, except towards the προσευχή devotion and assiduity, with the agreement both of my heirs Heraclides and Heliconias and under the joint guardianship also of the synagogue of the Jews. [my translation]

Chreste, a widow, frees one of her household slaves at the προσευχή in order to fulfil a vow she has made. She gives him total liberty, apart from his obligations to the προσευχή. The inscription states that this manumission has the agreement both of her heirs, who bear Greek names, and of the Jewish synagogue, obviously a group of people and not a building, who will act as joint guarantors of the slave's continuing freedom.

The sole commitment the slave has to keep is the mysterious reference to showing attention or 'flattery' (θωπεία strictly means that) and perseverance towards the προσευχή. There is no means by which to decide if this is a commitment to work of a menial sort, or a religious commitment to be given by the freed slave, either voluntarily or under duress.

2 The other, less well-preserved, but similar, inscription (684) from the same place is undated.²⁸ It also names the προσευχή as the place where an enfranchisement took place, and similarly names the synagogue of the Jews as co-guarantors of the slaves' freedom, and makes the previously noted enigmatic requirement of 'flattery and

²⁸ Latyshev, *Inscriptiones*, II, pp. 51-53; Frey, *Corpus*, I, pp. 496-97.

perseverance' towards the προσευχή. And the reading of this closely parallel text does not depend on the text of 683 for decipherment.

3 Inscription (683a), also similar, is dated to the second century CE.²⁹ The author of the inscription releases, in the προσευχή, his home-reared slave, to be totally free of disturbance by the author's heirs, and liable only to be constantly at hand in (or regularly attend) the προσευχή, the conditions to be under the joint guardianship of the author and the synagogue of the Jews and the God-fearers.³⁰

In all three inscriptions the synagogue of the Jews is referred to only in its civic function as a group with memory, voice and power in the community. The buildings associated with these synagogues of Jews are called προσευχαί.

GORGIPPIA

Another similar inscription (690), addressed to the Most High God, and internally dated to 41 CE, describes the dedication by one Pothos of a female slave, in a προσευχή, according to a vow.³¹ She is to be undisturbed and unmolested by his heirs. The main difference between this and the earlier inscriptions is that the new status of the slave, which is not clearly described as freedom, is to be guaranteed by the heirs through Zeus, Ge and Helios.

It appears that the προσευχή of Gorgippia could be the scene of manumissions without the involvement of the Jewish synagogue

²⁹ Frey, *Corpus*, I, pp. 65-66.

³⁰ See also the much more fragmentary, but similar, inscription 683b in Frey, *Corpus*, I, p. 66, also dated to the second century CE.

³¹ Latyshev, *Inscriptiones*, II, pp. 208-209; Frey, *Corpus*, I, pp. 500-501.

being stated, but whether they were involved on that occasion is undiscoverable. Scholars regard this inscription either as pagan and having belonged to a pagan προσευχή, or as coming from a Jewish community which was tolerant of names of alien deities used in formulaic expressions.

ASIA MINOR

PHOCAEA (in Ionia)

An inscription (738) possibly from the third century CE, describes the honouring of a woman benefactor by the synagogue of the Jews:³²

Τάτιον Στράτωνος τοῦ Ἐν
πέδωνος τὸν οἶκον καὶ τὸν πε
ρίβολον τοῦ ὑπαίθρου κατασκευ
άσασα ἐκ τῶ[ν ἰδ]ίων
ἐχαρίσατο τ[οῖς Ἰο]υδαίοις.
Ἡ συναγωγή ἐ[τείμη]σεν τῶν Ἰουδαί
ων Τάτιον Σ[τράτ]ωνος τοῦ Ἐνπέ
δωνος χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ
καὶ προεδρίᾳ

Tation, daughter of Straton, son of E(m)pedon, having built the house and the wall of the courtyard out of her own funds, gifted it to the Jews. The synagogue of the Jews honoured Tation, daughter of Straton, son of Empedon, by means of a golden crown and the privilege of sitting at the front.³³ [my translation]

The name given for the building is οἶκος rather than the more familiar word προσευχή, but it is again clear from the inscription that the synagogue of the Jews is not a building, but is a body which could award favours and privileges. And, despite the lack of clear

³² Frey, *Corpus*, II, p. 8; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 21-22; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, pp. 110-11.

³³ Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, p. 22, implies that equipping the precinct could include enclosing the courtyard and installing a fountain with basin therein.

date, the value of this inscription is its witness that the forms used in inscriptions were similar in different regions.

The giving of a golden crown suggests a correspondence with items of a similar sort reported by Philo for προσευχαί in Alexandria.³⁴

SMYRNA (in Ionia)

One tomb inscription (741), undated, indicates that a Jewish woman called Rufina was archisynagogos there.³⁵ A dating of the second or third century CE has been proposed. This indicates the presence of a group of Jews in Smyrna.

SYNNADA (in Lycia)

A marble fragment from the first or second century CE, refers to an archisynagogos.³⁶ The existence of a group of Jews in Synnada may be inferred from this inscription.

ACMONIA (near Apamea in Phrygia)

Inscription 766 describes a building (literally a house: οἶκος) founded or built by Julia Severa,³⁷ a Roman citizen, around the time of Nero about the middle of the first century CE, and later restored by Jewish dignitaries of the town, so recognised by the titles ἀρχισυνάγωγος and ἄρχων. The synagogue honoured them for this

³⁴ See data and discussion below on inscriptions from Acmonia and Berenice.

³⁵ Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 10-11; Broton, *Women Leaders*, pp. 5-11, notes pp. 223-25; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, pp. 104-106, 125.

³⁶ Frey, *Corpus*, II, p. 23.

³⁷ Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 27-28, but note that this reading has been superseded by that of Robert quoted by the other sources; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 34-36; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, pp. 58-60.

work in ways suggestive of Philo's description of the commemorative slabs in προσευχαί in Alexandria.³⁸

Τὸν κατασκευασθέντα οἶκον ὑπὸ
 Ἰουλίας Σεουήρας Π. Τυρρώνιος Κλά-
 δος, ὁ διὰ βίου ἀρχισυνάγωγος καὶ
 Λούκιος Λουκίου ἀρχισυνάγωγος
 5 καὶ Ποπίλιος Ζωτικὸς ἄρχων ἐπεσ-
 κεύασαν ἔκ τε τῶν ἰδίων καὶ τῶν συν-
 καταθεμένων καὶ ἔγραψαν τοὺς τοί-
 χους καὶ τὴν ὀροφὴν καὶ ἐποίησαν
 τὴν τῶν θυρίδων ἀσφάλειαν καὶ τὸν
 10 λυπὸν πάντα κόσμου, οὕστινας καὶ
 ἡ συναγωγὴ ἐτείμησεν ὄπλῳ ἐπιχρύ-
 σῳ διὰ τὴν ἐνάρετον αὐτῶν δ[ι]άθ[ε]-
 σιν καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὴν συναγωγὴν εὖνοιάν
 τε καὶ σπουδὴν

The building constructed by Julia Severa, Publius Tyrronios Klados, archisynagogos for life, and Lucius, son of Lucius, archisynagogos, and Popilios Zotikos, restored both out of their own funds and from the deposited sums, and they inscribed the walls and the ceilings, made secure the windows and made all the rest of the ornamentation, whom also the synagogue honoured with a gilded shield because of their virtuous disposition and both their good will and enthusiasm towards the synagogue. [my translation]

In line 11 of the inscription the 'synagogue' which honours its two officials is clearly the group of Jews, but in the last line of the inscription it is possible to understand that the building is named as a 'synagogue' at the unstated time of its restoration. However, the closing phrase is ambiguous, since people can show good will to a *community* by their actions in enhancing the *community building*.³⁹

³⁸ See discussion below on Phocaea, Acmonia and Berenice.

³⁹ This is the understanding of Lifshitz for he translates συναγωγὴ as *communauté* both times it occurs in the inscription, which is surprising on two counts. First that in so doing he departs from the translation of Frey, and second in that he often refers to a building as a *synagogue* when the Greek has προσευχή. In a similar way

PALESTINE

JERUSALEM

A well-preserved and well-known inscription from Jerusalem is the Theodotus inscription (1404), describing the building of a synagogue:⁴⁰

- Θ[ε]όδοτος Ουεττήνου, ἱερεὺς καὶ
 ἀ[ρ]χισυνάγωγος, υἱὸς ἀρχισυν[αγώ]
 γ[ο]υ, υἱωνὸς ἀρχισυν[α]γώγου, ὥκο
 δόμησε τὴν συναγωγὴν εἰς ἀν[άγν]ω
 5 σ[ιν] νόμου καὶ εἰς [δ]ιδαχ[ή]ν ἐντολῶν, καὶ
 τ[ὸ]ν ξενῶνα, κα[ὶ] τὰ δώματα καὶ τὰ χρη
 σ[τ]ήρια τῶν ὑδάτων, εἰς κατάλυμα τοῖ
 ς [χ]ρέζουσιν ἀπὸ τῆς ξέ[ν]ης, ἣν ἔθεμε
 λ[ίω]σαν οἱ πατέρες [α]ὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ πρε
 10 σ[β]ύτεροι καὶ Σιμων[ί]δης

- Theodotus, son of Quettenos (Vettenos), priest and
 archisynagogus, son of an archisynagogus,
 grandson of an archisynagogus, built
 this synagogue for the reading
 5 of the Law and for the teaching of the Commandments, and
 the
 hostel and the chambers and
 water fittings for the accommodation of those
 who [coming] from abroad have need of it, of which
 [synagogue] the foundations
 were laid by his fathers and by the
 10 Elders and Simonides.
 [translation: Chiat]

The grandson built a synagogue on the foundations laid by his forebears. The synagogue included a hostel, chambers and water

it is surprising that Frey, who usually translates συναγωγή as *communauté*, has in this case *synagogue*, indicating a building.

⁴⁰ Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 332-35; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 70-71; Chiat, *Handbook*, pp. 201-202.

fittings, and had as its stated purposes, the reading of the law and the teaching of the commandments. This is clear evidence of a synagogue building in Jerusalem, possibly with an early date, as some scholars give a date in the first century CE, perhaps pre-70 CE.⁴¹ But this is disputed, the original finders dating it to the second century CE.

EGYPT

ALEXANDRIA

A badly damaged inscription from the Gabbary quarter in the south-west of Alexandria (1432), dated to c. 37 BCE, refers to a προσευχή.⁴² Only the bottom left-hand corner of the slab remains.

[Υπὲρ]⁴³ βασιλίσσης καὶ βασιλέως θεῶι [μεγάλωι]
ἐπηκόωι, Ἄλυπος τὴν προσευχήν ἐποιεῖ (ἔτους) ιε'
Με[χείρ ...]

For the queen and the king, to the great god who listens, Alypos made the προσευχή in the 15th year, (in the month) Mecheir ...[my translation]

SCHEDIA (Kôm el-Gize, twenty miles from Alexandria)

A limestone slab from Schedia bears an inscription (1440) about the foundation or building by the Jews of a προσευχή for Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BCE) and his wife Berenice.⁴⁴

⁴¹ The original dating is palaeographic; see further in discussion later in the Chapter.

⁴² Frey, *Corpus*, II, p. 360; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, p. 76; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', in Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, III, p. 139; note he gives ἐποίει for ἐποιεῖ, corrected to normal Greek orthography by Frey.

⁴³ ὑπὲρ: for or on behalf of; Frey and Lifshitz give *en l'honneur de*: in honour of, which in my view overlays the phrase with a meaning of subservient veneration not warranted by the Greek preposition.

⁴⁴ Griffiths, 'Egypt and the Synagogue', pp. 2-3; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', p. 141; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, p. 78; Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 366-67; Breccia, *Inscriptiones graecae Aegypti*, p. 6; no verb is supplied in the Greek.

[Υ]πὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Βερενίκης
ἀδελφῆς καὶ γυναικὸς καὶ τῶν τέκνων, τὴν προσευχὴν οἱ
Ἰουδα(ῖ)οι.

For King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, sister and wife, and their
children, the Jews [? built] the προσευχή. [my translation]

XENEPHYRIS (Kom el-Akhdar, c. 20 km south-west of
Damanhur, Western Delta)

A marble block bears an inscription (1441) in good condition
about the addition of a vestibule to a προσευχή, by the Jews of
Xenephyris between 143 and 115 BCE.⁴⁵

Ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς
ἀδελφῆς καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς γυναικὸς οἱ ἀπὸ
Ξεनेφύρεος Ἰουδαῖοι τὸν πυλῶνα τῆς προσευχῆς προστάντων
Θεοδώρου καὶ Ἀχιλλίωνος.

For King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, his sister, and Queen
Cleopatra his wife, the Jews from Xenephyris, the vestibule of
the προσευχή, Theodoros and Achillion being presidents.
[my translation]

The word προστάτης means the holder of an office, a leader or
regent or person in authority.

⁴⁵ Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 367-68; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', pp. 141-42; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 78-79. Ptolemy VII Euergetes II Physicon (145–117 BCE) was married to both his sister Cleopatra and his niece Cleopatra between 143 BCE, when he married his niece, and 115 BCE, when his sister died.

NITRIAI (Wadi Natroun, in the south-west of the Delta in the Libyan desert)

A similar inscription (1442), with a similar date, points to the existence of a προσευχή with outbuildings or appurtenances.⁴⁶ This indicates that there could be a complex of chambers rather than only a single hall.

Ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς ἀδελφῆς καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας τῆς γυναικὸς Εὐεργετῶν, οἱ ἐν Νιτρίαις Ἰουδαῖοι τὴν προσευχὴν καὶ τὰ συγκύροντα.

For King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, his sister, and Queen Cleopatra his wife, the Jews of Nitriai [? built] the προσευχή, and the outbuildings. [my translation]

ARTHRIBIS (Benha, in the south of the Delta)

1 An inscription (1443) from the first or second century BCE, it being difficult to date since five Ptolemies had wives named Cleopatra, shows a named person joining with the Jews of the community to donate the προσευχή.⁴⁷

Ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας Πτολεμαῖος Ἐπικύδου ὁ ἐπιστάτης τῶν φυλακτικῶν καὶ οἱ ἐν Ἀθρίβει Ἰουδαῖοι τὴν προσευχὴν Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ.

For King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, Ptolemy, son of Epikydos chief of police and the Jews of Athribis [? built] the προσευχή to the Most High God. [my translation]

⁴⁶ Frey, *Corpus*, II, p. 369; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', p. 142; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, p. 79.

⁴⁷ Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 370-71; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', p. 142; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, p. 79.

It is not clear from this inscription whether the chief of police was Jewish, or an associate of the Jews in some way, or merely associated with them in this matter.

2 A second inscription (1444) describes an addition to the προσευχή:⁴⁸

Ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Κλεοπάτρας καὶ τῶν τέκνων Ἑρμίας καὶ Φιλ(ω)τέρα ἢ γυνὴ καὶ τὰ παιδιά τήνδε ἐξέδραν τῇ προσευχ(ῇ).

For King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, and the[ir] children, Hermes and Philotera his wife and their children [built?] the portico on the προσευχή. [my translation]

Here, as in 1443, it is not clear that the donors are definitely Jews.

ARSINOE-CROCIDILOPOLIS (in the Fayûm)

1 A inscription for a προσευχή (1532a) from the middle of the third century BCE, similar to the one found in Schedia (1440).⁴⁹

Ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Βερενίκης τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ ἀδελφῆς καὶ τῶν τέκνων οἱ ἐν Κροκ[ο]δίλων πόλει Ἰουδ[αῖ]οι τὴν προ[σ]ε[υ]χήν]

For King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, his wife and sister, and the[ir] children, the Jews in Crocodilopolis [? built] the προσευχή ... [my translation]

Here also a verb relating the Jews to the προσευχή and indicating the nature of their actions is lacking.

⁴⁸ Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 370-71; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', p. 143; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁹ Griffiths, 'Egypt and the Synagogue', pp. 3-4; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', p. 164; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 80-81.

2 A papyrus recording a land survey in the late second century BCE indicates the existence of a Jewish προσευχή on the outskirts of the town.⁵⁰ The relevant pieces are quoted below.

Col. II

16

... βο(ρρᾱ)
προσευ(χή), λι(βὸς) περίστασις πό(λεως), ἀπη(λιώτου
'Αργα(ίτιδος)

διῶρυ(ξ).

βο(ρρᾱ) [ἐ]χ[ο(μένης)] προσευχῆς Ἰουδαίων δια Περτόλλου ...

... to the north, a synagogue [*sic*]; to the west the city boundary; to the east the canal of Argaitis.

Situated to the north, a Jewish synagogue [*sic*] represented by Pertollos ...

Col. III

29 γεί(τονες) νό(του) προσευχῆς Ἰουδαίων, βο(ρρᾱ) [καὶ
λι(βὸς) περίστα(σις) πό(λεως), ...

... Neighbours: to the south a Jewish synagogue [*sic*]; to the north and west the city boundary ...

The papyrus indicates that the προσευχή was a considered to belong to the same category as a consecrated garden, a store house, an empty dove cote, other sacred land and houses.

3 Another papyrus from Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis, dated to 113 CE, gives an account of the water supply in the municipality, including details of payments to be made by certain bodies.⁵¹ Two Jewish prayer-houses are included in the list of customers, one referred to as a προσευχή and the other as a εὐχεῖον.

⁵⁰ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, pp. 247-49.

⁵¹ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, II, pp. 220-24.

Col.III

57 ἀρχόντων Ἰ[ου]δαίων προσευχῆς Θηβαίων μηνιαίω(ν) (δρ.) ρκη·

Παχών (δρ.) ρκ[η], Παῦνι (δρ.) ρκη, Ἐπεῖφ (δρ.) ρκη,
Μεσορῆ (δρ.)

ρκη,

ιζ (ἔτους) Θῶθ (δρ.) ρκη, Φαῶφι (δρ.) ρκη (γίνονται) (δρ.)
ψ[ξη].

60 εὔχειου ὁμοίως Παχών (δρ.) ρκη, Παῦνι (δρ.) ρκη, Ἐπεῖφ
(δρ.) ρκη,

Μεσο(ρῆ) (δρ.) [ρκη],

From the *archontes* of the synagogue [*sic*] of the Theban Jews
128 dr. monthly: Pachon, Payni, Epeiph, Mesore, 17th year,
Thoth and Phaophi. Total 768 dr.

From the *eucheion* likewise 128 dr. monthly: Pachon 128 dr.,
Payni 128 dr., Epeiph 128 dr.; Mesore 128 dr.

The fragment informs us that the group who represent the
Theban Jews in the payment for water is the group of ‘rulers of the
προσευχῆ’ of the Theban Jews, which is the sole occurrence of this
phrase.

Also of interest is the fact that the monthly charge for the prayer-
houses, both 128 drachma,⁵² corresponding to 31 obols daily, is far
greater than the charge of 18 obols made to a bath-house, or 13 obols
for a brewery and 9 obols for a fountain. As the editors remark, ‘the
use of water in a Jewish synagogue [*sic*] might be extensive’.⁵³

PHILADELPHIA (in the Fayûm)

A papyrus from the middle of the third century BCE suggests that
the sabbath was observed by someone engaged in the building trade,

⁵² Since 1 drachma = 7.25 obols, the monthly charge of 128 dr. per month of 30 days
represents a daily charge of 31 obols.

⁵³ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, II, p. 221.

since in the tally of bricks for each day of the week there is no entry for the seventh day, sabbath, the name of the day being written in place of a total of bricks.⁵⁴

Col. I
 ε Επεὶ
 ε ἔχω πλίνθον
 τῆς παρὰ Φιλέα
 Τκ
 5 ζ Ἀ
 ζ Σάββατα
 η Ἀ

Col. I
 Epeiph
 5th I have on hand bricks
 from Phileas
 920
 6th 1000
 7th Sabbath
 8th 1000

ALEXANDROU-NESOS (in the Fayûm)

Only the right half remains of a papyrus which tells the story of a woman's complaint to King Ptolemy about a stolen mantle.⁵⁵ It indicates that there was a προσευχή of the Jews⁵⁶ there in 218 BCE, for the cloak is taken by a third party to the attendant (νακόρος) of the προσευχή to hold until the dispute could be tried. The relevant section reads:⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, pp. 136-37.

⁵⁵ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, pp. 239-41.

⁵⁶ ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, with no reconstruction of the phrase.

⁵⁷ I have re-arranged the text as supplied by the editors to show more clearly that the right half of each line remains. I have also removed hyphens from the ends of the lines of the Greek text, and inserted square brackets at appropriate places in words in my English translation.

] ... αἰσθομένης δέ μου κατε
 τὸ ἱμ]άτιον ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐπιλα
]ωπους. ἐπιπαραγίνεται[ι] δὲ Λήζελμις (ἐκατοντάρουρος)
 το ἱμά]τιον Νικομάχῳ τῷ νακόρῳ ἕως κρίσεως

] ... When I saw him, (?)
 the cl]oak in the prayer-house of the Jews (?)
] (?). Lezelmis, a holder of 100 arourai, comes up to help
 the clo]ak to Nikomachos the attendant (to keep) until the case
 [my translation]

As it is not clear whether any or all of the people concerned were Jews, less can be made of this that would at first appear, but the προσευχή, and also its attendant, had apparently quite definite civic standing and power in this village.

OXYRHYNCHUS (and environs)

Two scraps of papyrus, one dated 7 BCE, and the other in Latin, dated second century CE, mention the sabbath by name as a dating reference for the matter discussed in the missing parts of the documents.⁵⁸

The first has only the partial phrase:

ἕως Σαμβ

‘till Sabbath’.

The second is a fragment of a business letter in Latin:

d[.]i[.].[.]r
 mandas
 se·propter
 sambatha
 fac·itaque
 emas·et

⁵⁸ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, III, pp. 14-16.

tradas
suimer[o]ti
. . .

... to have consigned (?) because of the Sabbath. Therefore be sure to buy and hand over to ...

This fragment indicates that the sabbath was known as a day which had an effect on some people's transactions.

OF UNKNOWN PROVENANCE, BUT ACQUIRED IN EGYPT

1 A badly-preserved papyrus, possibly from the second half of the first century BCE in the reign of Cleopatra, seems to refer to a meeting of Jews in a προσευχή to discuss some business in the community.⁵⁹

The opening line of the text reads:

].-ἐπὶ τῆς γ[ε]νηθείσης συναγωγῆς ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ...

... At the session held in the proseuche

or, my translation:

... at the meeting of the synagogue in the προσευχή ...

The editors' translation seems to me to depend on an unwillingness to distinguish between προσευχή and συναγωγή, but this text seems to me to do that most effectively. In the προσευχή building the entity called the συναγωγή came into being in order to discuss common business. This agrees exactly with the model I have for the functioning of the synagogues of the Jews.

2 A broken slab of white marble, of which only the bottom right-hand corner survives, bears a dedication inscription (1433) for the

⁵⁹ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, pp. 252-54.

sacred precinct, the προσευχή and its subsidiary buildings.⁶⁰ Lewis gives the provenance of the slab as Hadra.

[... θε]ῶι ὑψίστῳ [ἐπηκόῳ, τ]ὸν ἱερὸν [περίβολον καὶ] τὴν
προσ[ευχὴν καὶ τὰ συγ]κύροντα.

... to the Most High God ... the sacred precinct and the προσευχή,
and the outbuildings.

As can be seen, the reconstruction supplies a large proportion of the text, but can be accepted on the basis of its similarity with the inscription from Nitriai (1442 above).

3 An inscription (1447) on the base of a statue in black granite, with a possible Alexandrian provenance, refers to a man who was the προστάτης of the synagogue. No date can be assigned to it.

Ἀρτέμον Νίκωνος προστατήσας)⁶¹ τὸ ια' (ἔτος) τῇ συναγωγῇ
...

Artemon, (son) of Nikon, having been προστάτης of the
synagogue ... the eleventh year ...[my translation]

The meaning of the reference to the eleventh year is not clear, but the position of προστάτης as an office within the synagogue is attested in the inscription from Xenephyris (1441 above).

4 A well-preserved inscription (1449) on a rectangular slab, found in Cairo, but of unknown original provenance, is written in Greek

⁶⁰ Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 360-61; Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, p. 76, the phrase 'la proseuque' is omitted from the translation; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', in Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, III, pp. 139-40.

⁶¹ The inscription has a symbol made of the two letters Π and P with Π superimposed on P.

with a Latin coda.⁶² The date is uncertain, but 270 CE, in the reign of Queen Zenobia and her son, has been suggested to be a better estimate than the earlier suggestion of 44-30 BCE.

Βασιλίσσης καὶ βασιλέως προσταξάντων ἀντὶ τῆς
προανακειμένης περὶ τῆς ἀναθέσεως τῆς προσευχῆς ἡ
ὑπογεγραμμένη ἐπιγραφήτω. Βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Εὐεργέτης
τὴν προσευχὴν ἄσυλον.
REGINA ET REX IUSSER(UN)T.

On the orders of the queen and king, in place of the previous plaque about the dedication of the προσευχή let what is written below be written up. King Ptolemy Euergetes proclaimed the προσευχή inviolate.
The queen and king gave the order. [my translation]

No reason has been discovered, or suggested, as to why a second inscription was necessary, or why the first one might have needed to have been renewed,⁶³ and as the inscription is likely to be late third century CE, it has only been included for comparison purposes, since it shows a late usage of the word προσευχή for a communal building, and in that regard agrees with the Latin inscription from Mursa.

CYRENAICA

BERENICE (Bengazi)

Two inscriptions from Berenice provide important background to understanding the religious life of the Jewish community there.⁶⁴ One is well preserved, but the other is badly mutilated and depends on

⁶² Frey, *Corpus*, II, pp. 374-76; Lewis, 'Jewish Inscriptions', p. 144.

⁶³ Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, I, p. 94.

⁶⁴ Roux and Roux, 'Des Juifs', pp. 283-96; Applebaum, *Ancient Cyrene*, pp. 160-65, 192-93, but note that what Roux and Roux call the first inscription Applebaum generally calls the second, although on p. 161 he writes one paragraph using the opposite naming, thus implying that both inscriptions refer to re-furbishing the amphitheatre.

the first for decipherment. Both report the honouring of important and honourable public figures in exactly the same way by the local Jews, referred to here not as a synagogue, but as a *πολίτευμα*; it is the *ἄρχοντες* (rulers) and the *πολίτευμα* (ethnic group) who make the decision.

The honours conferred and the notification of them by means of an inscription are reminiscent of items with similar purposes reported by Philo for *προσευχαί* in Alexandria, when he refers to decorated slabs on the interior walls.⁶⁵ Therefore, these inscriptions add to our knowledge of how Jews honoured Romans in ways that were acceptable to both groups.

The inscriptions also name some of the religious festivals of the Jews, but do not directly refer to the sabbath.

1 The first inscription honouring Decimus Valerius, who refurbished the amphitheatre in Berenice, is damaged, and has date letters which are somewhat obliterated. It could be from 8 to 6 BCE, but Roux and Roux recommend a latitude in the dating of between 30 BCE and 100 CE.

The inscription to Decimus Valerius shows that the Jews decided to exonerate him from any public charges in return for his refurbishment of the amphitheatre, as well as honouring him in at the assemblies and new moons and making the details of the honouring public by means of an inscribed stone stele in the amphitheatre.

⁶⁵ See discussion below.

2 The clearer inscription, honouring Marcus Tittius for his honest and kind dealings with both the Jews and the Greek citizens of Berenice, is from 25 CE. The Jews resolved, at the Feast of Tabernacles, to honour Marcus Tittius whenever they met together for assemblies and new moons. And they similarly decided to place the inscribed stele in the most publicly obvious place in the amphitheatre. But neither inscription refers to where the Jews met for these assemblies, indicating only the public place in which they put the commemorative stele.

The inscriptions share a common piece of text which deals with the nature of the honours accorded and with the involvement of the Jews in publicising that honour. This is presented here from the clearer of the two inscriptions, but the texts are identical, barring a few verbal flourishes.

21 ὧν χάριν ἔδοξε τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τῷ πολιτεύ
ματι τῶν ἐν Βερενίκῃ Ἰουδαίων ἐπαινέσαι τε αὐ
τὸν καὶ στεφανοῦν ὀνομαστὶ καθ' ἑκάστην
σύνοδον καὶ νουμηνίαν στεφάνωι ἐλαίνωι καὶ
25 λημνίσκωι· τοὺς δὲ ἄρχοντας ἀναγράψαι τὸ
ψηφισμα εἰς στήλην λίθου παρίου καὶ θεῖναι εἰς
τὸν ἐπισημότατον τόπον τοῦ ἀμφιθεάτρου
Λευ καὶ πᾶσαι

On account of these things, it seemed good to the rulers and to the ethnic group of the Jews in Berenice both to honour him and crown him by name at every assembly and new moon with a crown of olive leaves and chaplet, and that the rulers should record the vote on a stele of Parian stone and place it in the most visible place in the amphitheatre.

All votes white. [my translation]

The importance of these inscriptions for this study are that they show that the Jews of Berenice, in the first century CE, celebrated assemblies (including the Feast of Tabernacles) and new moons. But there is no indication of where or how they celebrated them, their communal building is not named. However, the next inscription, from 30 years later, does refer to a synagogue building in Berenice.

3 Unfortunately, apparently only a photograph now exists of this clear inscription of 20 lines from Berenice, dating from the middle of the first century CE. The text is about the restoration of a synagogue building and lists the names of the contributors to the restoration.⁶⁶ The photograph of the slab shows that it was found as part of the wall of a building, and also shows that the language and lettering of this inscription are less precise than those on the two inscriptions on the Parian marble steles.⁶⁷

(Ἔτει) β' Νέρωνος Κλαυδίου Καίσαρος Δρούσου
Γερμανικοῦ Αὐτοκράτορος χοϊάχ ις'
ἐφάνη τῇ συναγωγῇ τῶν ἐν Βερενικίδι
Ἰουδαίων τοὺς ἐπιδιδόντες εἰς ἐπισκευ
ὴν τῆς συναγωγῆς ἀναγράψαι αὐτοὺς εἰς στ
ῆλην λίθου Παρίου *vacat*

In the second year of the rule of Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus, Emperor, on the sixteenth of Khoiakh, it appeared [*sic*] to the synagogue of the Jews in Berenice to inscribe on a stele made of marble from Paros [the names of] those who had contributed to the restoration of the synagogue. [my translation]

This inscription from Berenice in 56 CE is of vital interest for it provides the earliest, unequivocal, and dated, use of the word

⁶⁶ Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs*, pp. 81-83.

⁶⁷ Applebaum, *Ancient Cyrene*, pp. 161-63; Robert, 'Berenikè', pp. 275-76.

συναγωγή meaning a building. Both the Jewish community and their building are referred to independently by the word 'synagogue' in this inscription.

DISCUSSION OF THE DATA ABOUT THE SABBATH

The three epigraphical texts which refer to the sabbath occur on papyri found in Egypt. All three use the sabbath as a dating reference, and two indicate that the sabbath was somehow different from other days, the clearest indicating that the sabbath was a day on which no bricks were delivered. But there are no further details about the sabbath in any inscriptions from any of the locations surveyed here.

Applebaum, however, regards the assemblies of the Jews mentioned in the two inscriptions honouring Marcus Tittius and Decimus Valerius as *sabbath* assemblies, as well as monthly gatherings and the New Year.⁶⁸ But this is not a faithful rendering of the Greek texts on two counts: first, there is no way of identifying which assemblies are meant, and second, the monthly gatherings when Jews met were the new moons and not gatherings at any other recurring monthly date. There is no clear allusion to either the sabbath or the New Year as is implied by Applebaum.

It has to be concluded that whatever Jews did on the sabbath in all the places surveyed here over the period prior to 200 CE, no details or indications have survived on stone or papyrus.

⁶⁸ Applebaum, *Ancient Cyrene*, pp. 160-65, 193.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ABOUT SYNAGOGUES

There are no undisputed remains of synagogue buildings from the first two centuries of the common era. What have been found do not bear any written or pictorial details which would allow definite identification of the buildings as synagogue buildings. Similarly there are no inscriptions identifying those buildings as προσευχαί. So because of the necessity of interpreting the evidence in order to understand it, it must be presented alongside the discussion about its meaning and implications.

DISCUSSION OF SYNAGOGUE REMAINS

That previously long-held beliefs about synagogues have been recently opened to question can be seen in the critical re-assessment of the evidence for early synagogues by several scholars.⁶⁹ They review the evidence for synagogues during the period of the second Temple.

Grabbe is convinced of the reality of synagogues in the Diaspora from the second century BCE, accepting an equation of the terms προσευχή and συναγωγή,⁷⁰ but he finds the archaeological evidence for synagogue buildings in Palestine to be slender before the first century of the Common Era. Meyers and Strange see a burgeoning of the synagogue as a fully fitted and decorated building in the third century CE, but not before then. Gutmann, Seager, and Chiat take the

⁶⁹ Gutmann, 'Synagogue Origins', pp. 1-6; Gutmann, 'The Origin of the Synagogue', pp. 72-76; Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology*, pp. 141-46; Chiat, 'Methodological Problems', pp. 49-60; Seager, 'Overview', p. 43; Grabbe, 'Synagogues', pp. 401-10; Hoenig, 'Temple-Synagogue', p. 130.

⁷⁰ Grabbe, 'Synagogues', pp. 402-403.

stance that there are no certain first-century synagogue remains in Palestine.

Others believe that there were synagogue buildings in Palestine before the destruction of the Temple.⁷¹ Yadin claims that the finding of portions of a scroll below the floor of a chamber at Masada is certain proof that the structure was used as a synagogue before 74 CE.⁷² Foerster accepts first-century dates for the buildings identified as synagogues at Masada, Herodium, Chorazin, Migdal and Gamla, using as criteria similarities with other types of securely dated buildings, such as temples at Dura-Europos.⁷³ Gutman identifies a synagogue at Gamla by means of the seating, the two entrances, the heart-sectioned corner columns and a carving of a rosette.⁷⁴

Ma'oz gives the latest possible date for the building at Gamla as 67 CE, for it was then that the Romans destroyed the city, and then refines the views of Gutman as to its date of building.⁷⁵ He concludes that the Gamla building was erected between 23 BCE and 41 CE, using both literary evidence from Josephus, and stratigraphic evidence of coins and pottery to make this judgement. He also remarks on the rosette motif as being a design found on Jewish tombs, but he does not give the criteria by which he decided that the building was a synagogue.

Chiat takes these authors to task on methodological grounds. She first objects to the lack of evidence or argumentation to show that

⁷¹ Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 11-12 and *passim*.

⁷² Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 21-22.

⁷³ Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 24-29.

⁷⁴ Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 34.

⁷⁵ Levine, *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 35-36.

buildings in Palestine took buildings from Dura-Europos as their model, and can be validly identified as religious buildings by means of similarities with temples found there. Then she resists the assumption that there was 'a uniform widespread Jewish religious ceremony during the era of the Second Temple that would require a particular type of building', and refuses to accept that premise since no evidence has been provided for it.⁷⁶ She sees assumptions being used to interpret archaeological data, and refuses to accept any conclusions arrived at by such methods.

Thereafter she demolishes the claims made by Foerster about the similarity of the buildings he calls first-century Palestine synagogues, by presenting the data in numerical and tabular form so that differences become apparent. Her judgement is that the two buildings built by Herod at Masada and Herodium were chambers, in the style of *triclinia*, for the use of Herod's entourage, and that the buildings at Gamla, Migdal, and Chorazin were village assembly halls. She does not dispute the first-century origin of these five buildings, but resists the claim that they were built specifically to suit Jewish religious requirements.

The archaeological remains of buildings cannot lie about the functions of the buildings, but the scholarly 'readers' of such remains may bring assumptions to bear that allow them to see in the stones what others do not see. Until all scholars can find the evidence unequivocal, the existence of first-century synagogue buildings in Palestine remains, in my estimation, unproven.

⁷⁶ Chiat, 'Methodological Problems', p. 51.

DISCUSSION ON INSCRIPTIONS ABOUT PRAYER-HOUSES AND SYNAGOGUES

1 PRAYER-HOUSE BUILDINGS

Greek inscriptions from the third century BCE in Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis, from second century BCE in Delos, Xenephyris, Nitriai, from the first or second century BCE in Arthribis (2), from the first century BCE in Alexandria, Berenice (2); from the first century CE in Gorgippia, Panticape, and from the second century CE in Panticape, along with undated ones from Olbia, Panticape, Schedia and three of unknown provenance and date all point to the existence of prayer-house buildings known as προσευχαί in all the provinces of the central and eastern Mediterranean.

Latin inscriptions from Rome and from the late second century CE in Mursa, show that similar buildings were known by the Latin name *proseuchae*. And papyri from Egypt from Alexandrou-Nesos in the third century BCE and from Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis in the late second century BCE confirm the inscriptional evidence.

That these prayer-houses were controlled by Jews is indicated by three inscriptions from Panticape and one from Olbia on the northern shores of the Black Sea and also by seven inscriptions from five places in Egypt. There are also papyri from three Egyptian sites, two of which coincide with the sources of the inscriptions, confirming this connection.

An interesting feature of the papyrus from Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis detailing the accounts of the water department there is the fact that the 'rulers' are referred to as 'rulers of the προσευχή', an expression indicating either a phrase with the same meaning as

the later title 'ruler of the synagogue' or a title indicating a role with respect to the community building, in either sense a possible bridge between the concept of 'ruler of the synagogue' as leader in a community, and the later usage of 'ruler of the synagogue' to mean a person with responsibility for a synagogue building.

Seven dedication slabs from προσευχαί in Egypt have as their opening a reference to the ruling king and queen. The French translations of the inscription render ὑπέρ as 'in honour of', but that shows more veneration than is warranted, and I have rejected that translation as being too strong. But it should be noted that the very first line of all such inscriptions is given to this naming of the rulers. And there is a similar first section in the Latin inscription from Mursa, indicating that the practice was not confined to Egyptian Jewry addressing Egyptian rulers.

Perhaps these inscriptions, and these translations, have contributed to the views of Rivkin, referred to in Chapter 4, that Jews built προσευχαί and dedicated them to their ruler in order to avoid having to introduce statues of the rulers. Such statues would have to be worshipped, or addressed in some way, in their meeting-houses,⁷⁷ and that would be anathema to the Jews. By dedicating the whole building to the rulers, the problem could be side-stepped, for in some sense the building dedicated to the ruler could be thought of as an offering to the glory of the ruler, and in that guise might satisfy the ruler's loyalty expectations. Jews wishing to live peaceably under their rulers could make such dedications without feeling compromised.

⁷⁷ Rivkin, 'Ben Sira', pp. 350-51.

However, none of the inscriptions or papyri links the Jews and the προσευχή with any kind of Jewish worship, or with any Jewish assembly whatsoever, apart from, apparently, those involved in the enfranchisement of slaves and in hearings about petty thefts.

2 SYNAGOGUES AS GROUPS OF JEWS

Many of the inscriptions refer to the role of archisynagogos, ruler of a synagogue. This is a person who rules over others and has been chosen by them to do so. Other inscriptions record that the 'synagogue of the Jews' made a decision, or conferred honours or privileges. In these usages 'synagogue' clearly means the group of people and cannot mean a building.

The catacomb inscriptions provide a reliable literary witness to the existence of sixteen Jewish groups or 'synagogues', with officials with distinct titles, in Rome around the turn of the era, and Latin inscriptions in two other sites in Italy indicate Jewish groups there also.

An Egyptian papyrus of the first century BCE, and an undated inscription, both of unknown provenance, but probably Egyptian, indicate that there were groups of Jews in Egypt known as synagogues.

A door lintel from Corinth inscribed with the words 'the synagogue of the Hebrews' points to the existence of a Jewish group using that building there at the time. While this could be evidence of a building known as a synagogue, the inscription on the lintel is not, *per se*, necessarily evidence that the building was known by the name synagogue. What is certain is that either there was a building used by

people known by that name or there was a building known by that name. But the value of this inscription is that it shows a possible means by which the name 'synagogue' could become transferred from the group to the building.

In Asia Minor the synagogues of the Jews had an important role to play in the community, and they exercised some sort of civic power. At Panticape in the first and second centuries CE, the synagogue of the Jews was involved in guaranteeing the continuing freedom of enfranchised slaves. At Phocaea the synagogue honoured a woman benefactor in the third century CE, as did the synagogue of Acmonia in the first, or possibly second, century CE. At both Smyrna and Synnada inscriptions record the existence of a person acting as archisynagogos around the second century CE.

The importance of the first Panticape inscription (683) to this discussion is that it employs the two words συναγωγή and προσευχή in ways which clearly confirm the distinction between them, namely that the building associated with the community life of the Jews is the προσευχή, whereas the community itself is described as the synagogue.

Also clear from this and the other two inscriptions from Panticape⁷⁸ is the fact that the Jewish synagogue was in some sense a civic body which had been accorded responsibility and authority in the town, whether officially or unofficially. The public ceremony of the freeing of slaves took place in the προσευχή and under the auspices of the synagogue of the Jews.

⁷⁸ Cf. also the undated inscription from Gorgippia.

Other civic functions of the synagogue of the Jews included honouring citizens with inscriptions and privileges. Thus Tation, a woman of Phocaea, was given a golden crown and seating privileges as a result of building work donated to the οἶκος there. And although the similar inscription from Acmonia can be dated no more exactly than to some time after the reign of Nero, it is similar, and honours Lucius and Popilius Zotikos with a gilded shield for their restoration of a building, an οἶκος, otherwise described as 'their goodwill and enthusiasm towards the synagogue'.

The translation of the last phrase of the inscription is not straightforward, and depends on one's understanding of grammar and syntax. As 'synagogue' is definite in the last line it should refer back to the previous usage of the word, where it meant 'the community', and that is the reading I have followed. Also the building under discussion is referred to at the beginning of the inscription by the word οἶκος, so it is not likely that another word, particularly one already used to mean the community, would be employed to indicate the building at the end of the inscription. So, in my judgement, 'synagogue' means the group of Jews in both places where it occurs in this inscription, but it has been taken by others to mean a synagogue building.

It is not clear from the inscriptions from Acmonia whether the crowns and shield were objects given to the benefactors, or placed in the προσευχαί as decorations near the inscription, or whether they were carved parts of the framework of the inscription. It is therefore tempting, although there are not exact verbal parallels, to assimilate the reference to the golden crown given to Tation at Phocaea, and the

gilded shields awarded to the benefactors at Acmonia, with Philo's references to the presence in προσευχαί of 'shields and gilded crowns and the slabs and inscriptions'.⁷⁹ The two practices seem similar and seem designed to allow quasi-public recognition of goodwill of Jews or others without breaking the second commandment.

Also similar is the practice recorded twice for Berenice, in Cyrenaica. The 'synagogue' of the Jews honoured Marcus Tittius and Decimus Valerius, both in the same way by inscribing on a marble stele, placed in a most conspicuous spot, their decision to honour these men with a crown of olives at every assembly. This is in harmony with the avowals of both Philo and Josephus that the Jews gave honour, though not worship, to people who deserved it. Here, in Berenice as elsewhere, the synagogue of the Jews had civic power, for they could place inscribed steles in the public amphitheatre.

But although both inscriptions refer to the holding of regular Jewish assemblies, they do not state the names of the Jewish assemblies, other than new moons and the Feast of Tabernacles, nor give the name of the Jews' communal building.⁸⁰

In Jerusalem, near Mount Ophel, a representative from each of three generations of the one family served as archisynagogos of a Jewish community there, some time in the first two centuries CE. This inscription shows the existence of the group 'the synagogue' preceding the existence of the synagogue building by some fifty or so years.

⁷⁹ Philo, *Embassy* 133, has ἀσπίδων καὶ στεφάνων ἐπιχρύσων καὶ στηλῶν καὶ ἐπιγραφῶν (shields and gilded crowns and stelae and inscriptions); and the inscriptions have the phrases χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ (gilded crown), and ὄπλῳ ἐπιχρύσῳ (gilded shield).

⁸⁰ See discussion on the synagogue building in Berenice below.

This survey of inscriptions and papyri shows that the use of the word 'synagogue' or the phrase 'synagogue of the Jews' to mean the group of Jews who made decisions and carried them out is widespread in all the regions studies here. The only variant being at Olbia and ~~Arcinoo-Crocodilopolis~~ where the phrase 'rulers of the προσευχή' occurs in situations where a corporate act is envisaged.⁸¹

The inscriptions indicate the existence of Jewish groups called 'synagogues', which had appreciable civic power. But the only religious function ascribed to these groups, and that at Berenice only, is their commitment to holding assemblies and new moon festivities.

3 SYNAGOGUES AS BUILDINGS

Inscriptions which refer to restoration of a synagogue, or the addition of a portico or water fittings, clearly speak of buildings and not people.

Two undated mosaics from Egina (772, 723) refer to the restoration of synagogue buildings, but such evidence as there is suggests that they are not relevant to this study.

The undated inscription (738) in which the Jews of Phocaea honour Tation on account of her extension and refurbishment of the building there does not add anything to our information about Jewish synagogue buildings, for the word used for the building is οἶκος.

The Julia Severa inscription (766) from, perhaps, the end of the first century CE, also refers to a building called an οἶκος, and to later officials who expressed their regard for the synagogue by building

⁸¹ Another variant occurs in the papyrus from Alexandrou-Nesos where the phrase 'the prayer-house of the Jews' (ἡ προσευχή τῶν Ἰουδαίων) occurs meaning the building.

works. Some scholars believe that this refers to a synagogue building but the grammar of the inscription makes that at least suspect and in my view unlikely. The synagogue here is the Jewish group of which these enthusiasts were members.

The most certain reference to a synagogue building from the first century CE is now available only as a photograph of an inscription found at Berenice. The fact that names of contributors to the restoration of the synagogue are inscribed on a stele, indicates that there was a building in Berenice called a synagogue. Of interest is the fact that the lettering and grammar of the inscription are not up to the standard of the two inscriptions placed in the amphitheatre. Possibly this indicates a Jewish stone-cutter working on the slab in the synagogue building, certainly someone less expert than the carver of the inscriptions to Marcus Tittius and Decimus Valerius.

But the most problematic of the inscriptions as far as interpretation is concerned is the Theodotus inscription (1404) from Mount Ophel in Jerusalem which is usually referred to as providing proof of the existence of a synagogue in Jerusalem in the first century CE. At the same time this existence of a synagogue is taken to be proof of weekly worship services close to the temple. But a closer reading shows that several assumptions have to be made to reach that conclusion. Reading the text of the inscription without assumptions points to rather a different conclusion.

The ten lines of inscription commemorate a man who ruled the synagogue after his father and grandfather (3 lines), and who had built this synagogue, a building in which the reading of the Law took place and the teaching of the Commandments (2 lines). Also

important enough to merit space in the inscription is the hospitality suite, with 'water fittings' for the accommodation of travellers (2.5 lines). The inscription closes with another reference to the building process and the Elders (2.5 lines).

We should note that the people merit 5.5 lines, the reading of the law and the teaching of the commandments 2 lines and the *en suite* facilities 2.5 lines. The inscription has more text referring to the people than to the building, and in the 4.5 lines dealing with the building, the hospitality suite takes up 2.5 lines. Thus the reading of the law and the teaching of the commandments takes up only 20% of the total text.

The inscription commemorates a Jewish family, and in particular a man who ruled the synagogue following his father and grandfather in that office, and who built this synagogue, a building in which the reading of the law took place and the teaching of the commandments. The first two generations in the family did not 'build' this synagogue, although they 'ruled' it. They were responsible for the foundations, but they could hardly rule over those. So they were rulers of the *gathering*, and their grandson was the one who provided or completed the *building*.⁸²

No mention is made of the day or days on which the law would be read or on which teaching took place; daily could be just as likely as weekly if this were our only indication of the practice.

But important enough to merit even more space in the inscription is the hospitality suite, with 'water fittings' for the accommodation of travellers. The stone which bears the inscription

⁸² Cf. Lk. 7.5, for a literary reference to someone building a synagogue, in this case a Roman centurion, apparently not a member of the synagogue.

was part of a building which acted as a place for withdrawal from daily life, to read and study Torah. No doubt Jews who were travelling needed a place to rest on the sabbath.⁸³

This picture, of a vital community centre as well as a place for withdrawal from daily life, is in complete accord with the picture we find in the works of Josephus, Philo and the New Testament, but with the addition of the idea of hostel as well. However, in common with the other sources studied, there is no mention of any communal practices—other than reading and teaching—being carried out in the synagogue. And the sabbath is not referred to at all.

If this stone could be accurately dated, it would give some idea of when Jews built synagogues in Jerusalem. But unfortunately one of the methods for dating this stone, palaeography, suggests quite widely differing results.

The discussion in the scholarly literature, dating from the first quarter of this century, is dominated by the views and conclusions of Clermont-Ganneau to such an extent that neither the article by Reinach,⁸⁴ who obsequiously agrees with Clermont-Ganneau, nor that of Vincent,⁸⁵ who attempts timorously to present an alternate dating and provenance, give the exact reference to his first, I think, oral presentation.⁸⁶ The inscription was kept secret at first for fear of 'foreign' scholars outstripping the results of the French archaeological team. It is difficult to pinpoint the arguments of

⁸³ Filson, 'Synagogue Inscriptions', p. 45, assumes that the inscription was set up where it could be seen by local or visiting Jews, but he does not state whether he means by that that it was on the outside or inside wall of the synagogue.

⁸⁴ Reinach, 'L'inscription de Théodotus'.

⁸⁵ Vincent, 'Découverte'.

⁸⁶ Reinach, 'L'inscription de Théodotus', p. 52; Vincent, 'Découverte', pp. 256-57.

Clermont-Ganneau, even using his article,⁸⁷ largely because he supports his conclusions—in the main—by means of speculation and bombast.

Vincent's views are referred to by Reinach as an 'ingénieux petit roman',⁸⁸ and are refuted by that means alone. Vincent, who takes the trouble to flatter Clermont-Ganneau in his article,⁸⁹ also tries to present a case for a date in the first third of the second century.⁹⁰ However his arguments comparing the inscription with inscriptions from the reigns of Augustus and Nerva—though based on palaeographic arguments that I find at least as convincing as those of Clermont-Ganneau comparing the script with the inscription from Herod's Temple—seem to have been ignored or by-passed by the scholarly world. Yet his dating—by palaeography—to the reign of Hadrian seems every bit as plausible as the earlier dating of Clermont-Ganneau.

But in the end they come to their conclusions by means of their separate ideas of the identities of the persons named in the inscription. Thus, as far as they were concerned, the dating was not made on palaeographic grounds. The palaeography merely supported the other equally loose arguments.

Vincent's extension of the possible dating obtained by palaeographic means down to the time of Hadrian makes a dating of post-135 CE also a possibility, but he moves away from that position by various arguments based on conflating references to the proper

⁸⁷ Clermont-Ganneau, 'Découverte'.

⁸⁸ 'A clever novelette'.

⁸⁹ Vincent, 'Découverte', p. 256.

⁹⁰ Vincent, 'Découverte', pp. 263-71.

names of the inscription in other classical sources with references in Acts and finally declares that the synagogue housing the inscription fell in 70 CE.⁹¹

The whole discussion is fraught with circumlocutions hinting at the strain of preserving professional etiquette in situations where scholarship and personalities are at odds. As a result I find it impossible to agree with any of the proposals of these arguing scholars and conclude that neither the palaeographic method, nor the investigations as to likely bearers of the proper names, can give an precise date for the Theodotus inscription.

These same scholars also try the approach of historical reconstruction and suggest that because, as they see it—in my opinion erroneously—three generations of one family knew the synagogue ‘building’, it ‘must have’ stood on Mount Ophel for 70 years or so. Therefore, because it ‘must either have been built before the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, or after 135 CE’, it being assumed to be ‘unlikely’ that the Romans would have sanctioned such building between those years, the synagogue would have to have been built by about the turn of the era.

As a result of the consensus of this enclave of scholars, many modern scholars accept a pre-70 CE date for the Theodotus inscription, without realising how fragile is its basis, and go on from that to make generalised statements about synagogues and Judaism in first-century Palestine, including such inferences as the ritual use of water.⁹²

⁹¹Vincent, ‘Découverte’, p. 277.

⁹²Brooten, *Women Leaders*, pp. 24-26; Goodman, *Roman Galilee*, p. 86.

In short the Theodotus inscription is not certain evidence of the existence of a pre-70 CE synagogue in Jerusalem, it may be or it may belong to a much later building. And any constructions built on the evidence of the stone are not data in themselves.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

There are a few conclusions which can be made with complete certainty.

- 1 Jews in many parts of the Greek-speaking Diaspora⁹³ maintained communal buildings called προσευχαί in which they exercised civic functions for the community and venerated their rulers by dedicatory inscriptions. In Latin-speaking regions⁹⁴ the buildings were called *proseuchae*, and one inscription carries a similar expression of loyalty to the Emperor.
- 2 Jews in Palestine did not as a rule call their communal buildings προσευχαί.⁹⁵
- 3 In Asia Minor the Jews made use of a building called an οἶκος, and there are no inscriptions referring to προσευχαί in Asia Minor.
- 4 In Berenice the Jews met together to celebrate assemblies, new moons and the Feast of Tabernacles, and their building was called a synagogue in the first century CE.
- 5 Jews had communal buildings in Palestine in the first century CE, but it is not known if they were built for a specifically religious function, nor whether they were known by a specific name.

⁹³ Delos, Olbia, Panticape, Gorgippia, and many sites in Egypt.

⁹⁴ Rome and Mursa.

⁹⁵ Apart from Josephus's description of the προσευχή at Tiberias.

In later centuries there were similar or more elaborate buildings called synagogues in which Jewish religious and educational gatherings were held.

6 The Jews of a town or village were known communally as the 'synagogue of the Jews' in Egypt, Asia Minor and in towns on the northern shores of the Black Sea. The 'synagogues of the Jews' had a public voice and a public memory. They had standing in the community and could mediate in disputes and give honours to local citizens of worth.

7 There was in Jerusalem a synagogue in which the teaching of the law and the reading of the commandments took place, and hospitality was given to travellers.

All these conclusions are in complete harmony with the findings from the literary texts already studied. And as with the literary sources, there is no indication of gatherings for worship on the sabbath.

10. CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This study has presented what may be known about the sabbath worship activities of ordinary Jews in the cities and towns of the eastern Mediterranean, through the period from 200 BCE to 200 CE. The results are mainly negative. If sabbath worship took place few descriptions of it have survived—and those relate to the priests of the Jerusalem Temple and to members of other particularly religious groups of Jews.

EVALUATION OF THE METHODS USED

The rigour with which questions have been asked about the provenance and validity of every fact, source, explanation, theory and also about the comparisons and evaluations made on the basis of them, has given me confidence that what has been discovered is reliable.

Assumptions made by scholars in premises, descriptions, explanations and stages of arguments have been identified. Some of these are the result of the degree of simplification of data and explanation that has to be done in order to produce an overview. Others result from use of simplified material brought in as background to a more detailed study. Such assumptions have been scrutinised to judge whether or not they are valid and whether they have been used in valid ways. If they were found to be invalid, they were replaced with less wide-ranging but more certain premises.

The chosen approach of working through the groups of texts, but keeping their evidence separate in the first instance, was found to be both possible and useful as it facilitated the distinguishing of both the similarities and the differences in the information the different sources supplied.

The use of controls was very helpful in examining the textual material. Thus the parallel study of the new moon with the sabbath throughout the study showed quite clearly that both days changed their status as holy days during the period being studied. It also showed that the two days had far more in common than is usually supposed.

And the use of different types of textual source, Jewish, Christian and secular, did provide different perspectives on the descriptions of the sabbath activities of Jews, and facilitated the identification and quantification of the writers' bias.

THE EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXTS

The Hebrew Bible prescribes rest on the sabbath as far as ordinary people are concerned. They have no religious duties particular to the sabbath. Some texts indicate that special sabbath activities were required from the priests in the Jerusalem Temple. They had to work on the sabbath, as on other days, and in some texts they are described as offering extra sacrifices on each sabbath day.

The intertestamental texts provide a variety of views about the importance of the sabbath in the lives of their readers. Some texts ignore the sabbath completely—even where mention of it might be expected as in the description of the religiously observant lifestyle led

by Tobit. Others, for example the Dead Sea Scrolls, expect a strong commitment to the sabbath from the membership of the group. They have many strict rules curbing both behaviour and thoughts on the sabbath and they also provide an inventory of liturgical texts that suggests there was a regular practice of singing a particular psalm on each sabbath throughout the year.

The apocryphal and deuterocanonical works do not present a unified picture of the sabbath. Many books do not refer to the sabbath at all, but in Judith and in the Books of the Maccabees the sabbath is regarded as a holy entity with some kind of existence in its own right. The sabbath has to be protected, or shown respect, and can also influence one's behaviour on the day before as well.

The book of *Jubilees* conveys an attitude to the sabbath which has much of the strictness shown by the texts from the Dead Sea community. Many actions are prohibited which are not forbidden in the Hebrew Bible or in the apocryphal and deuterocanonical works. Punishment is harsher—including the death penalty for sabbath-breaking. But also in this book, alone among those studied, is the injunction that the readers eat, drink, be content and also bless God on the sabbath day.

So from the intertestamental texts we discover that the Qumrân community held worship gatherings on the sabbath, but the most that was required of any other observant Jews in the way of positive activity on the sabbath was blessing God and being content.

In the writings of Philo and Josephus, separated either by distance or time from the practices of the Jerusalem Temple, the communal gatherings of the Jews for prayers, festivals, or sabbath,

were held in groups called ‘synagogues’ and in buildings called προσευχαί or—by Josephus—συναγωγαί (in one place, Tiberias in a προσευχή). These sabbath gatherings are depicted as comprising reading and listening to the law with a time for explanation and discussion thereafter.

The account Josephus gives of the prolonged three-day complex of events at the προσευχή in Tiberias includes various activities—prayers, public fast and sabbath assembly—but for the sabbath gathering he describes only a general assembly in which a heated political discussion took place and the interruption of that meeting for the regular sabbath meal at noon. There is no reference to prayers or psalms—or even reading Torah—in his account of that sabbath in the προσευχή in Tiberias.

Both these cultured and educated Jewish writers describe the sabbath gatherings—and the privileges accorded them under Roman law—several times, but they refer to no worship activities whatsoever.

The secular Greek and Roman writers noticed, in the main, the domestic aspects of the Jewish religion. So, for the sabbath, they describe a meal of fish with wine, served after the lamps had been lit. Several of them regarded the Jews’ sabbath inaction as ‘idleness’, but Frontinus recognised it as the fulfilment of a religious obligation. The writers observed nothing distinctive in the Jews’ sabbath behaviour apart from their inactivity.

The gospels contain many stories about the actions or teaching of Jesus on the sabbath. But the main thrust of the argument they make is that Jesus had the power to supersede the sabbath law and could re-define suitable sabbath activity. The stories reveal little about what

happened in the 'synagogues' of Jesus' day. Part of the reason for this is that the gospel writers are writing out of their own social world and portray 'synagogues' as they knew them—later synagogues and ones where the Jews were in opposition to the Christians. Also the setting of the stories in the 'synagogues' is not for the purpose of giving a description of what happened there; it is done to make persuasive arguments about the value of Jesus in reforming the Jewish religion.

The early Christian writers spend much of their literary energy in encouraging their respective flocks to be busily active on the sabbath so that they will not be mistaken for Jews. They also ask them to celebrate their seventh day of rest and worship on Sunday. But they make no reference to the Jews doing anything active on the sabbath—they make ironic comments about the Jews' trust in idleness as a way of showing honour to God. They do not appear to be aware of special sabbath gatherings of Jews; they treat all gatherings of Jews together, and in the same inimical way.

The Mishnah adds little to what has been discovered from the other texts. There the rules about the sabbath gathering make the privileging of the sabbath readings from Torah quite overt, and the prescribing of seven readers for the sabbath, who must stand and read singly from the Torah, shows that the sabbath gathering was marginally more important than the gatherings on Mondays and Thursdays. But there are no details about any worship activities which should be included in the sabbath gathering.

The data from archaeological and epigraphical materials confirm what has been found in the literary texts. The 'synagogue' of the Jews was a group of men who met together. Sometimes these

synagogues met in a building called a προσευχή, or in an οἶκος or in a συναγωγή, but possibly they met in their homes as well. There is no archaeological or epigraphic evidence that points unequivocally to the existence of synagogue buildings in first-century Palestine, although there is one piece of evidence to suggest that there was a synagogue building in the North African city of Berenice during the reign of Nero. First-century synagogues are, on the whole, groups of male Jews. Any descriptions of synagogue buildings in Palestine refer to a time later than the first century CE.

There is no evidence that the sabbath was a day of worship for ordinary Jews prior to 200 CE.

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